

special section: kitchen basics, cooking times, substitutions, freezing tips...

JULY 2003 NO. 58

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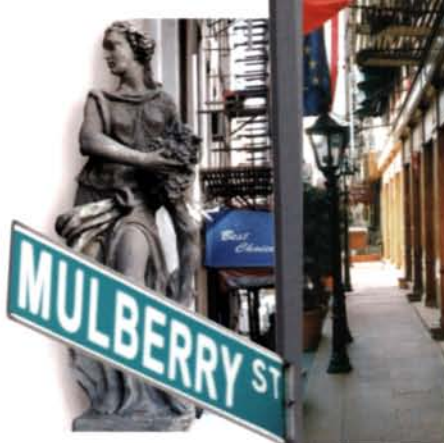
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Chef Michael De Georgio
Executive Chef of Il Cortile



Rigatoni with Eggplant & Spicy Peppers

Ingredients (serves four)

- 4 cloves of garlic, cracked
- 4 shallots
- 4 oz. Colavita Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 18 oz. canned plum tomatoes
- 1/2 cup chicken broth
- Salt, pepper, oregano, red pepper and fresh basil to taste
- 4 Italian hot finger peppers, sliced and cut
- 3 whole eggplants, sliced 3/4 inch thick
- 1/2 cup Parmigiano Reggiano cheese, grated
- 1 lb. Colavita Rigatoni

1. In a heavy sauté pan, sauté the garlic and shallots in 2 oz. extra virgin olive oil until golden brown. Add in the broth and the tomatoes. Bring to a boil and season with salt, pepper, oregano, red pepper and fresh basil. Simmer for 20 minutes. Puree sauce through a food mill.
2. Season the eggplant with salt and pepper and drizzle with extra virgin olive oil. Grill on a barbecue or broiler until golden brown on both sides and tender. Remove from broiler and cut into 1-inch cubes. Sprinkle well with the parmigiano reggiano grated cheese and put back into the broiler to toast the cheese. Remove and set aside.
3. Sauté the sliced hot peppers in extra virgin olive oil until golden brown. Add into the sauce.
4. Cook the pasta until al dente. Toss the pasta in the sauce with half of the toasted eggplant, parmigiano cheese and fresh basil.
5. Plate the pasta and top with the rest of the toasted eggplant.

For a free copy of Michael De Georgio's Classic Italian Favorites recipe booklet go to www.colavita.com



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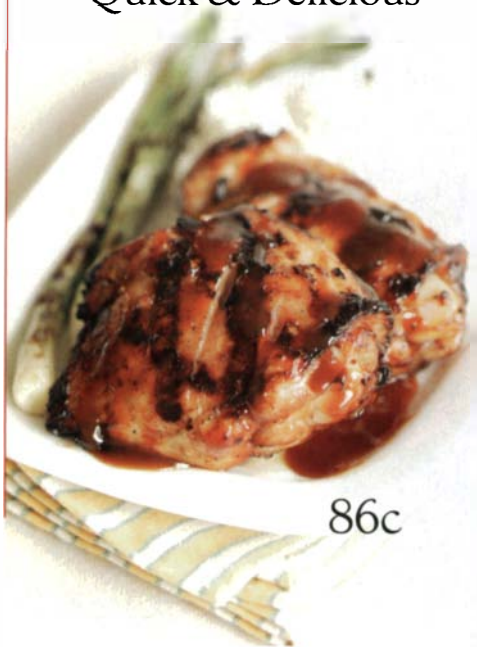
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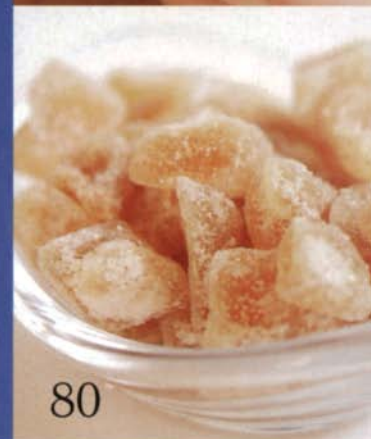
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Time for outdoor entertaining

This is a busy time of year for entertaining: Between graduations, bridal showers, the Fourth of July, and summer visitors, chances are you're having people over to eat a lot more often. With the weather warming up, everyone can mingle outside, do a little grilling, and generally relax. Now all you need is a few knockout menus for food that everyone will like. We've suggested some flavorful lineups, where the food is familiar but the recipes are special enough to keep things interesting. Be sure to check the yield of every recipe before you start cooking; you might have to double or triple a recipe for a party.

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from the editor

PLANNING FOR A FINE COOKING BIRTHDAY

As usual, the *Fine Cooking* editors are working on several issues at once: sending the June/July issue to the printer, photographing seasonal produce for next year, testing Thanksgiving turkeys, and—most notably—planning some special editorial features for our tenth anniversary.

We'd actually like to ask you to do some of the work for us on this one—we want you to tell us which *Fine Cooking* recipes are your favorites. Send us the recipe title and the issue number or date, and, if you like, let us know why you like this dish or how you serve it. Choose recipes from all the years that you've been reading *Fine Cooking*, but try to pick just one recipe from any given year. (This will be a fairly unscientific poll, however, so if you have a tie, send both.)

We'll be publishing some of your selections in early 2004, so we need your submissions by September 1. Send your picks by mail to Favorite Recipe, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506 or via e-mail to fc@taunton.com and use the subject line "Favorite Recipe."

—Martha Holmberg,
publisher/editor in chief

Wisconsin pride

In *Fine Cooking* #57, on p. 76, you list a Vermont Cheddar as tops. You may infer from my mailing address that I am exceptionally partial toward our fine Wisconsin cheeses, which are some of the best in the country. Several years ago, a client of mine who owned a cheese store came upon a 15-pound block of Cheddar he had purchased in 1958 to custom age. He divvied up that block and gave his friends each a 1-pound rewaxed chunk. I kept mine for several years. By the time I opened it, it was 26 years old, velvety

smooth, and heavenly in exquisite taste.

The next time you want cheese, it may just be worth your time to come to the Badger State to see what keeps us cheeseheads so happy and puts smiles on our faces.

—Charles McEniry
Stoughton, Wisconsin

Irish memories

The Artisan Foods column on the back cover of *Fine Cooking* #57 instantly brought back a memory of living on the west coast of Ireland in 1989: the memory of Johnny O'Toole,



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about 83 years of age, coming to our house, helping to gather the seaweed to put on the garden.

The day stands out clearly. The sun was shining, we had been working in the bog for a few hours, and he wanted to take a break. He pulled out of his back pocket a handful of dried "sea lettuce" and passed it around to eat. It was chewy, briny, and wonderful. You could always count on Johnny O'Toole to lift your spirits. Johnny went daily to the rocky shore to gather something of the sea. I can smell the "sea lettuce" now.

—Roz McLean, via e-mail

Making recipes your own

I agree with Jeff Diamond, whose letter was printed in *Fine Cooking* #56. I truly miss your "Cooking Without Recipes" feature. I heard about it on the Faith Middleton show on Connecticut Public Radio and bought my first *Fine Cooking* magazine for that feature. The article discussed braising. It was easy to follow and easy to make the recipe my own. I also learned a lot about different types of ingredients, when to add them, and why they were important to the recipe. I hope you bring back this series.

—Francene Weingast,
West Hartford, Connecticut

Editor's reply: See p. 53 for a "Cooking Without Recipes" approach to stir-frying, and look for beef stew without recipes coming up next winter. We welcome readers' thoughts on other topics you'd like to see handled this way.

Great kitchens don't need granite

I'm surprised and disappointed to see the kitchen featured in *Fine Cooking* #56 (Kitchen Detail, p. 24). *Fine Cooking* has always impressed me with its middle-of-the-road, pragmatic approach to cooking. With this presentation of a "Rolls

Royce of the Kitchen World" article, you blow this image.

I avoid other cooking magazines because they insist on giving the impression that cooking well is a matter of money—the more you got, the better you cook. With this article, you join that crowd.

The next time one of your editors wants to brag about her custom-designed sink, or her Breakfast Central espresso shop, send her to *Gourmet* please.

—David N. Williams, via e-mail

Editor's reply: I'd like to take issue with your assertion that by featuring Diane Morgan's kitchen, *Fine Cooking* has joined the crowd that believes that an expensive kitchen makes you a better cook. First let me restate the purpose of the Kitchen Detail column: to peer into the kitchens of real cooks—both professionals and non-pros—and examine the ingenious practical details that make cooking more efficient and fun for them. We look for ideas that can be translated to other kitchens, as well as original ideas that are unique to the featured kitchen. (And just for the record, Diane Morgan is a cookbook author, not a *Fine Cooking* editor.)

As someone who is five years into a do-it-yourself kitchen remodel (and who only last year got actual countertops), I can vouch for the whole staff when we say a beautifully *functional* kitchen is more important than a beautifully appointed one. We actually debated whether Diane's kitchen was too lovely to include in our column, but in fact her kitchen is full of interesting details that anyone could apply to his or her existing kitchen: sectional pullouts for pastry tools, a magnetic bar inside a drawer for safe knife storage, "garage" storage for small appliances, and more. And if a kitchen can be hard-working *and* gorgeous, all the better.

Turn to p. 26 in this issue to see a very different kind of kitchen: the tiny New York City apartment kitchen of a well-known cookbook editor and author. Very different from Diane Morgan's recently remodeled Portland, Oregon, kitchen, but an equally cool interpretation of what a cook considers the most important room in the house. ♦

Fine Cooking ...around the country

May 4:

Fine Cooking's culinary ambassador, Jennifer Bushman, demonstrates Quick & Delicious recipes from the magazine at Bloomingdale's **New York City**. For information, call 212-705-2000.

May 17:

Senior editor Amy Albert leads a seminar on pairing New England cheeses with wines from Australia and New Zealand at the Nantucket Wine Festival, **Nantucket Island**. For a schedule of events, visit www.nantucketwinefestival.com

June 5–6:

Jennifer Bushman demonstrates Quick & Delicious recipes from the magazine at Caprial and John's Kitchen, Portland, **Oregon**. Details are available at www.caprialandjohnskitchen.com.

June 26–28:

Contributing editor Molly Stevens teaches classes at the Loretta Paganini School of Cooking in **Ohio**. Visit www.lpscinc.com for times and locations.

Plus:

In the **Boston** area, listen for senior editor Amy Albert on "The Cooking Couple" radio program on stations WPLM 1390 AM and WBNW 1120 AM. Consult local listings for dates and times.

In the **Seattle** area, contributing editor Abby Dodge can be heard on Brian Poor's "Poor Man's Kitchen" on KOMO radio.

In the Southwest, tune in to Jennifer Bushman's "Nothing to It" television program to see demonstrations of recipes from the pages of *Fine Cooking*. The show airs on selected NBC and Fox stations in **Nevada, Arizona, Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho**. Check local listings for times.

Here's the place to share your thoughts on our recent articles or your food and cooking philosophies. Send your comments to Letters, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506, or by e-mail to fc@taunton.com.

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Depending on the weather and her mood, **MOLLY STEVENS** ("Dinner with Friends," p. 34) does her summer dining and entertaining on her screened-in porch or outside on her deck overlooking the Vermont hills. In addition to serving as a contributing editor to *Fine Cooking*, Molly travels around the country, teaching classes and giving demonstrations of *Fine Cooking* recipes (see the calendar of events on p. 12). Molly is currently writing a book on braising, to be published next spring by W. W. Norton. She's also a co-editor of *Best American Recipes 2003–2004*.



Katherine Seeley

As an occasional caterer, **TASHA PRYSI** appreciates hors d'oeuvres that are truly delicious and also quick to prepare and serve, which is why she turns to bruschetta (p. 40) so often. A cook at Chez Panisse Restaurant & Café in Berkeley, California, for five years, Tasha now teaches and writes about cooking. She contributed to two Chez Panisse cookbooks and to *The Pleasures of Slow Food*.



Molly Stevens

MARTHA HOLMBERG ("Bean Salads," p. 44) likes to linger with friends and family over summertime Sunday lunches, with some kind of bean dish often on the menu. On the days she has the pleasure of sleeping late, she uses her pressure cooker to speed up the cooking. Martha is the publisher and editor in chief of *Fine Cooking*.



Robert Danhi

Pastry guru and *Fine Cooking* contributing editor **ABIGAIL JOHNSON DODGE** bakes all year long, but in the summer, she's especially fond of ice-cream sandwiches (p. 66). Abby is the author of *Great Fruit Desserts*, *The Kid's Cookbook*, and Williams-Sonoma's *Dessert*, as well as *The Kid's Baking Book*, due out this fall from Williams-Sonoma. Abby wrote the New England and mid-Atlantic portions of *Savoring America*. She's now working on her next book, *The Weekend Baker*, to be published by W. W. Norton.



KATHERINE EASTMAN SEELEY ("Strawberry Shortcakes," p. 48) honed her baking skills at the French Culinary Institute and in top New York City kitchens like Bayard's, Bouley Bakery, and Sweet Melissa's Pâtisserie. While she likes trying out fancy desserts on friends and family, Kathleen notes that it's the unfussy desserts like strawberry shortcake that often get the biggest oohs and aahs. Katherine writes about food and develops recipes from her home in Norwalk, Connecticut.

ROBERT DANHI ("Stir-Frying," p. 54) is the former chef-instructor of the Cuisines of Asia course at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York. He has traveled extensively throughout Asia, learning the cultures and cuisines. Robert recently moved to Los Angeles, where he is the executive chef of Two Chefs on a Roll, a company that develops and manufactures food for restaurants, retailers, and markets worldwide.

ALI EDWARDS ("Arugula," p. 58) is a founding partner of Dirty Girl Produce in Santa Cruz, California, and runs the Green Table, an organic catering company. For more than eight years, Dirty Girl has been supplying San Francisco Bay area farmers' markets and restaurants with fresh green beans, radicchio, and arugula. Although Ali did a brief stint cooking at Chez Panisse in Berkeley, California, she says, "My most influential cooking experiences have come from cooking with the food I've grown myself."

SU-MEI YU ("Grilled Thai Chicken," p. 62) is the chef-owner of Saffron restaurant in San Diego. She's the author of *Cracking the Coconut: Classic Thai Home Cooking* (which won the IACP/Julia Child award for best first-time author), and *Asian Grilling*. Born of Chinese parents in Thailand, Su-Mei returns to her homeland annually to collect recipes for traditional, authentic Thai food.

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READER SERVICE NO. 54

Choosing a bread knife

To saw or to slice? BY MARYELLEN DRISCOLL



Top Pick

Wüsthof-Trident Classic

\$63 for a 9-inch knife

(a 10-inch version is \$82.50)

high-carbon stainless-steel

blade; high-impact

polypropylene handle

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800-859-6994

Everyone loved this knife. Whether it was thick, crusty bread or a soft loaf with tender, compact crumbs, slicing with this knife was smooth and practically effortless.

PROS: Solid feel—well balanced and substantial; sharp blade; point at tip drags beautifully through tough bottom crusts.

CONS: Although no one complained about the 9-incher we tested, the 10-inch blade would be perfect for slicing wide, round loaves.

It took seven stitches across my index finger before I bought my first bread knife. The doctor assumed I was yet another bagel-slicing casualty. I had to correct him: "It was a crusty peasant loaf." I may have had an ill-equipped kitchen, but I wasn't about to be an ordinary statistic.

A bread knife is really the only safe tool for cutting through a loaf of bread—a knife with a straight edge can slip. It's also remarkably good for slicing through tough-skinned

yet tender-fleshed fruits, including tomatoes, peaches, and plums. But there's such a wide selection of styles and sizes that it can be hard to know which to buy.

For this article, we put eleven bread knives to the test, slicing crusty peasant loaves, firm sourdough baguettes, thin-crust Italian loaves, bagels, and tomatoes. Of the eleven, five stood out as worthy of recommendation (featured, left to right, in order of preference). What set these five apart was that they were sharp, comfortable to hold, and able to slice smoothly and cleanly, without requiring an awkward sawing motion.

Maryellen Driscoll is Fine Cooking's editor at large. ♦

Should you sharpen your bread knife?

Because bread knives come in such infrequent contact with a cutting board (compared to, say, a chef's knife), they rarely need sharpening. Even when they do drag across a board, the sharpest parts of the blade—the rounded part between the "teeth"—never come into contact with the hard surface. If your bread knife does need sharpening, however, don't run it across a sharpening steel. Bring it to a professional knife sharpener (check your local yellow pages), who will have the proper tools to sharpen a serrated blade.

Tips for choosing a bread knife

A knife is a very personal tool, so we recommend you buy from a store that lets you hold the knife out of its packaging. This is the only way you'll get a sense for how it feels in your one-of-a-kind hand.

Examine the blade
Choose pointed versus scalloped serrations. Bread knives with the traditional pointed serrations can bite into a thick crust, giving the knife a firm grip on the bread

while the sharp edges of the blade (the rounded part between the points) do the slicing. In the test, knives that had scalloped rather than pointed edges proved slippery when breaking through top crusts and were less effective at slicing. The exception was the Mac knife (opposite). **The longer the blade, the better.** Eight-inch blades were generally too short. A ten-inch knife is ideal—able to span a round peasant loaf with plenty

of room for the back and forth motion of slicing.

A pointed tip is handy. Knives with pointed versus rounded tips were better at slicing through the bottom crust, the toughest part of a loaf. You can drag the pointed tip at a slight angle back through the bottom crust with little effort.

Be sure the blade is sturdy, not flexible. Hold the knife at an angle on its side (handle side up) and apply pressure. The blade shouldn't bend.

Runner-up

Sabatier White Micarta

\$58 for an 8-inch knife
high-carbon stainless-steel
blade; linen laminated handle
www.broadwaypanhandler.com
866-266-5927

This was another knife that didn't require "sawing" through bread. It was so sharp it practically fell through the loaves.

PROS: Very sharp; cuts easily; comfortable handle; decently balanced.

CONS: Blade is short, making it more awkward to slice through large loaves; not for someone who likes a lightweight knife.

Heft the handle

Clearance is good, but an offset knife isn't necessarily the best. We tested two knives with offset handles, and while most testers liked the design (it prevents scraping your knuckles on the cutting board), the blades on both knives sliced poorly.

Comfort is key. There was no consensus on the preferred handle material (i.e., wood versus plastic). Shape and comfort of grip were deemed more important.

One of a kind

Global

\$66 for an 8½-inch knife
(a 10-inch version is \$104)
high-carbon stainless-steel
blade; high-carbon steel
handle
www.cutleryandmore.com
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The chef's knife shape let you slice into a loaf—and a tomato—at a familiarly comfortable angle. The angled handle also made it easy to pull the blade back through a bottom crust for easy slicing.*

PROS: Sharp, clean slicing; hefty and comfortable; a revelation when slicing tomatoes.

CONS: The 8½-inch blade is a bit short for large loaves—but the 10-incher is pricey. (*Not recommended for chopping or as an alternative to a chef's knife.)

Comfortable

Mac

\$60 for a 10½-inch knife
high-carbon stainless-steel
blade; resin-impregnated
wood handle
www.cookswares.com
or call Mac Knife at
888-622-5643

The strong selling point for this knife was its slightly bowed shape, which provided space between your knuckles and the cutting board and created an overall comfortable feel.

PROS: Excellent leverage; clean, swift slicing; big but not bulky; comfortable.

CONS: Although the blade was significantly sharper than other scallop-edged knives in the testing, it tended to slip slightly when breaking through hard crusts.

Budget friendly

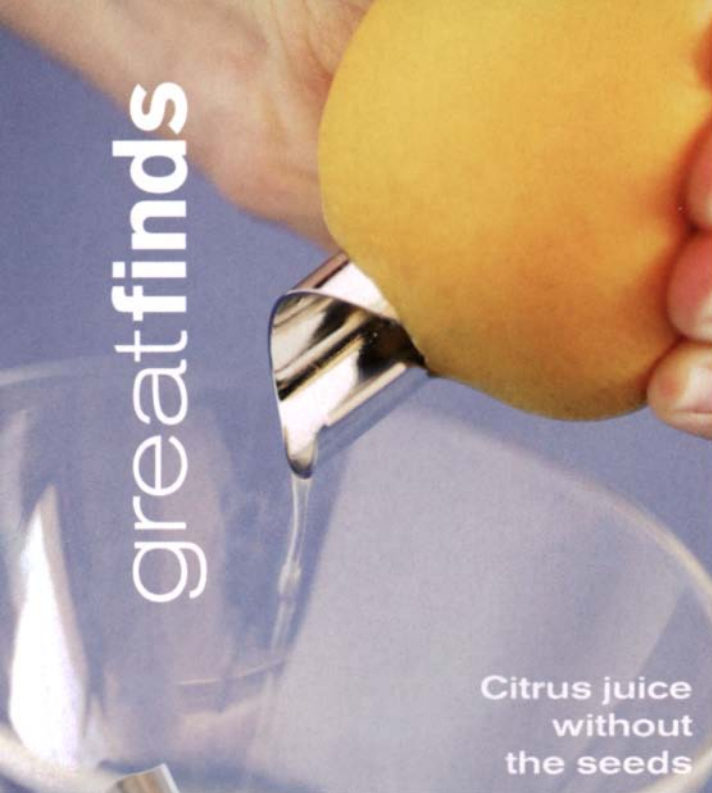
Chicago Cutlery Walnut Traditions

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www.acehardwareoutlet.com
or Ace hardware stores

One tester described this knife as "not sexy but serviceable," and that might be the best summation for this clunky but sharp and very affordable knife.

PROS: Cuts swiftly and cleanly; long blade; inexpensive.

CONS: Chunky, square handle; no clearance for knuckles between blade and board.



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without
the seeds



Until recently, I squeezed lemons upside down in my palm and simply hoped to avoid seeds—a lazy and ineffective technique. This nifty corkscrew-shaped tool from the Danish company Tommy Larsen has won my favor. It works simply: Slide its sharp, angled point into the top of a lemon, squeeze the fruit, and a thick stream of seedless lemon juice neatly pours down through the bottom. You can refrigerate the squeezer in the lemon for whenever you need a quick squirt. \$23 at www.designstore.com (888-279-0571).

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COMPILED BY TONY ROSENFELD



Crisp rice crackers for easy hors d'oeuvres

Eaten plain, these brown rice crackers from San-J have an irresistible crunch and saltiness. They're even better topped with Asian flavors for a quick hors d'oeuvres. I like layering the crackers (made from brown rice, black sesame seeds, and tamari) with shaved cucumber, seared tuna, and a dab of wasabi mayonnaise. Grilled red onions, cilantro, and thinly sliced beef are another good pairing. Available at Whole Foods markets, and at www.eforepantry.com (866-372-6879), where a 3.7-ounce package is \$3.99.



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Leafy cilantro, spicy-sweet coriander—

an herb and a spice
in one plant

BY RUTH LIVELY

Flavoring with coriander seed

Coriander seed goes well with starchy foods, with summer and winter squash and many root vegetables, in curries, and in baked goods. To bring out the fragrance in coriander, toast the seeds. Put them in a dry heavy skillet and set over medium heat for a few minutes until they become fragrant. Grind them in a mortar or in a spice grinder and

- ❖ stir into mashed potatoes;
- ❖ sprinkle on winter squash before roasting;
- ❖ combine with honey and butter when glazing carrots;
- ❖ mix with orange zest into pound cake batter or into scone or biscuit dough;
- ❖ add to a marinade for chicken with fresh cilantro, garlic, lemon, and olive oil.

Flavoring with cilantro

Cilantro pairs well with garlic, lemon, lime, chiles, and onions, and with other herbs like basil and mint. Depending on how fresh it is and on how it was grown, the strength of its flavor will vary. Taste a few leaves—if they're very mild, use more. Cilantro's flavor fades when heated. The stems pack a lot of flavor, so when I chop cilantro, I mince the tender stems and leaves together. For garnishing, I like to use whole leaves or the flowers. Here are a few ways to get to know cilantro:

TOSS A MIDDLE EASTERN BREAD SALAD of lightly toasted pita bread pieces, diced tomato, cucumber, sweet pepper, and onion. Add a couple of tablespoons each of minced cilantro, basil, and mint, and season with an olive oil and lemon juice vinaigrette.

MAKE A GARLICKY GREEN MAYONNAISE, a great spread for a tomato or grilled chicken sandwich. In a mortar or a mini food processor, grind a clove of garlic and a handful of cilantro leaves (or a mix of cilantro and basil) to a paste. Stir in a few tablespoons good-quality mayonnaise and a dash of hot sauce.

STIR UP A REFRESHING YOGURT SAUCE with chopped cilantro, minced onion or scallion, salt, and freshly ground black pepper. Serve with grilled vegetables.

MIX A BATCH OF CILANTRO BUTTER—it's delicious melted over hot-off-the-grill chicken, swordfish, steak, or lamb. Stir ⅓ cup chopped cilantro, 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest, and ¼ teaspoon sea or kosher salt into ½ cup softened unsalted butter.

Although the curiously pungent flavor of fresh cilantro can take some getting used to, once the taste is acquired, it can become a craving. There's a reason this herb is so widely used around the world in Asian, Latin American, and Indian cuisines—it has the magical effect of brightening other flavors, cutting through richness, and cooling spicy heat when combined with other flavors in hundreds of ways.

But even if you're convinced that fresh cilantro will never be your favorite, don't turn the page. This herb has a softer, friendlier side that's plenty easy to like—coriander, the mature seeds of *Coriandrum sativum*, the same plant that yields those tender stems and fringed leaves we call cilantro. Coriander seed has a warm, spicy-sweet scent and flavor, and if you grow cilantro in your garden, you can harvest coriander seed as a bonus when the plants go to seed (see the growing tips on p. 22). You can even harvest the roots, as they're used to flavor soups and spice pastes in Thai cooking.

(Continued)

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Potato Salad with Cilantro

Serves four to six.

This salad is easy to make, and very fresh looking. The warm potatoes seem to temper the herb's flavor, so it's a good way to introduce newcomers to cilantro.

2 pounds (6 to 8 medium) waxy potatoes, like Red Bliss, scrubbed
Kosher salt
½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
½ teaspoon grated lemon zest
3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
Freshly ground black pepper
½ cup lightly packed chopped fresh cilantro leaves (from about 20 big sprigs)
2 scallions (white and green parts), thinly sliced, or 1 shallot, minced

Put the potatoes in a large pot of salted water (about 1 tablespoon kosher salt). Bring to a boil and lower to a simmer. Cook, partially covered, until the potatoes are tender when pierced with a fork, about 25 minutes. Drain and let cool slightly. While the potatoes are still warm, slice them about ¼ inch thick (there's no need to peel, but discard any pieces of skin that come off on their own). Put half of the potatoes in a large serving bowl. Whisk together the oil, lemon zest and juice, 1 teaspoon salt, and several grinds of pepper. Drizzle half of the dressing over the potatoes. Add the remaining potatoes to the bowl, drizzle on the rest of the dressing, and toss gently with a large rubber spatula to combine well. Add the cilantro and scallions and toss gently again. Taste and add more salt as needed. Serve warm or at room temperature.



Cilantro-Lime Guacamole

Serves four to six as a dip.

Taste your guacamole as you're making it. Avocados can take a fair amount of lime juice and cilantro, but since both of these ingredients can vary in strength, it's a good idea to taste as you go.

2 medium-size ripe avocados
2 to 3 tablespoons fresh lime juice
¾ teaspoon kosher salt
½ teaspoon ground coriander
Pinch ground cumin
3 to 4 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro
1 teaspoon minced fresh jalapeño
Tortilla chips for serving

Halve the avocados, pit them, and scoop the flesh with a large spoon into a small mixing bowl. Sprinkle the lime juice over the avocados, add the salt, coriander, and cumin, and use a wooden spoon to break up the avocados, stirring until they're coarsely mashed. Stir in the cilantro and jalapeño. Transfer to a small serving bowl and serve with the tortilla chips.



Growing cilantro



Cilantro frustrates many gardeners because they try to grow it in high summer, but this herb bolts at the first sign of heat. The trick is to stop fighting the calendar and let the herb grow when it likes. In spring after the last frost, sow an entire packet of seeds in a patch in your garden, or set out several pots of purchased plants (each pot should have numerous little plants). Keep the plants well irrigated and harvest leaves and stems as you want. As the plants start to flower, let them be. When the seeds have matured and turned brown, harvest some but not all of them. After summer heat moderates, seedlings will sprout around the dried stalks. Harvest from these new plants all fall and leave them in the ground over winter. As soon as winter is over, they'll start putting on growth fast. Scatter more seed elsewhere in the garden to keep yourself in cilantro as long as possible.

Ruth Lively, formerly the senior editor of Kitchen Gardener, is a contributing editor to Fine Gardening magazine. ♦

Grow Your Own Fresh Basil



Discovering Basil

By Susan Belsinger

The first time I tasted pesto was on a warm summer night while dining alfresco at a restaurant in Fiesole, Italy. That dish changed my life. Before I left Italy, friends taught me how to make my own pesto. I then started growing basil so I could have it fresh whenever I wanted it. This past summer I cultivated over 40 different varieties of basil, each with its own distinctive fragrance and flavor. Who would have known that a dinner in Italy years ago would have started such a love affair?

Basil – the main ingredient in pesto, may be the most useful herb in the summer kitchen. There are more than 64 varieties of basil and, fortunately, all are easy to grow, requiring only full sun and consistent water. Most varieties are grown for culinary use, but some, especially those with purple foliage, have ornamental value.

Garden centers sell transplants of basil, but for the most interesting varieties, start seeds indoors four to six weeks before transplanting outdoors.

Be sure to keep basil cut back to ensure a harvest of fresh leaves throughout the season. Also, do not allow the plant to flower or the basil will turn bitter.

For more about Basil see Susan Belsinger's article in the May/June 2003 issue of *Fine Gardening* or visit us at www.finecooking.com/fg

RECIPE

Simple Pesto

Traditionally, pesto is made with a mortar and pestle, but can also be made with a food processor. It is quick and easy to make and highlights the flavor of basil like nothing else does.



Makes 1-1/2 cups

5 cloves garlic, peeled and sliced
1/4 cup pine nuts
4 cups basil leaves
Salt
1/2 cup freshly grated Parmigiano cheese
About 3/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil

In a food processor, combine the garlic, pine nuts, basil, a few pinches of salt, and a few tablespoons of the olive oil. Process until mixed. Add the cheese and most of the remaining oil and process until smooth. Taste for seasoning and add the rest of the oil or a little more cheese or salt, if desired.

Recipe from *Basil: An Herb Lover's Guide* by Thomas DeBaggio and Susan Belsinger, Interweave Press, 1996

Varieties of Basil

Favorites for pesto

Aromatic, full of flavor.

'Genovese'
'Italian Pesto'
'Genoa Profumatissima'

Cinnamon basil

Best for teas and baked goods.

'Cinnamon'
'Aussie Sweetie'

Lemon basil

Good for vinaigrettes, vegetables, and seafood; best in beverages and desserts.

'Mrs. Burns'
'Sweet Dani'

Spicy basil

Anise flavor, good ornamentals.

'Persian Anise'
'Siam Queen'

Lettuce leaf basil

Large leaves for sandwiches or salads.

'Napoletano'
'Lettuce Leaf'

Ornamental basil

Beautiful flowers and foliage.

'African Blue'
'Magical Michael'
'Dark Opal'
'Red Rubin'
'Ebony Wonder'
'Purple Ruffles'

Miniature basil

Small and compact.

'Piccolo'
'Dwarf Bouquet'
'Dwarf Bush Fine Leaf'
'Green Globe'



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I often see diver scallops on restaurant menus.
Could you explain what they are?

—Sara Delaney,
Fort Lauderdale, Florida

A Rod Mitchell replies: Diver scallops are scallops that have been hand-harvested by divers without assistance from draggers or other ecologically disruptive fishing equipment. The majority of divers fish for the scallops in waters about 15 to 30 feet deep directly off the coast of New England (mostly in Maine). Scuba gear and drysuits are required equipment, as the waters in these areas during the December to April season run from 35° to 45°F.

Same-day freshness is an advantage with hand-harvested scallops. Their texture is firm, not bruised, and they often taste much sweeter than normal scallops because they've suffered less stress. Hand-harvesting is also less disruptive to the sea bottom and eliminates unwanted bycatch (other bottom-dwelling fish or shellfish scraped up by scallop nets).

Diver scallops are more expensive than other scallops (sometimes twice as much) due to the extra work involved in fishing for them. Take care to inquire with restaurants or fishmongers whether their "diver scallops" have indeed been harvested by hand. Some restaurants inappropriately list their scallops as "diver" simply to entice the diner.

Rod Mitchell is the president of Browne Trading Company in Portland, Maine, and a former diver.

What does it mean when basil "goes to seed"?
Is there any way to prevent this?

—Chris Kilmartin, via e-mail

A Ruth Lively replies: "Going to seed" means just that—a plant's flowers have been pollinated and begun to set (or produce) seeds, fulfilling its goal to reproduce and perpetuate its species.

Unfortunately, a basil plant's natural tendency to set seed runs counter to the cook's goal of harvesting lots of tasty leaves; once flowering begins, leaf production grinds to a halt. To make matters worse, the flavor of the remaining leaves suffers because the volatile oils that give basil its flavor—and which are at their peak just before flowering—diminish, along with our chances of tasty pesto.

There's no way to completely prevent basil from flowering, but you can delay it by pinching off flower

buds as soon as they appear. (Incidentally, you can use these trimmings in salads, sauces, or any other way you'd use basil leaves.) As summer progresses, however, the plant devotes more energy to blooming. At this point, it's easiest simply to start growing new basil plants, but do plan ahead so the transition from old plant to new plant will be seamless. As you start harvesting from the first planting, sow more basil seed in another spot in your garden, or set out more purchased plants three or four weeks after harvest begins.

Ruth Lively is a contributing editor to Fine Gardening magazine.

Is it all right to freeze cheese? I sometimes buy mozzarella in bulk and then realize that I don't know what to do with it all.

—Martin Hammond,
Newburyport, Massachusetts

A Robert Aschebrock replies: You can freeze many cheeses if you take care to package them well, although a cheese's moisture level, salt content, and texture will also determine how well it survives the freezer.

Ice crystals often form in high-moisture cheeses (like Muenster, Monterey Jack, and fresh mozzarella) and in open-textured cheeses (like Havarti and some blues) during freezing. These crystals force the cheese curd apart, causing the cheese to become crumbly after thawing. While the cheese's texture may suffer significantly (it will be hard to slice or shred), it should be fine for melting and cooking. Also, its flavor shouldn't deteriorate considerably.

A cheese with a high salt content (like feta) isn't a great candidate for freezing. The higher the salt content, the colder the cheese must be to freeze, and the more likely ice crystals may form. After freezing, feta will normally only be suitable for incorporating into cooked dishes.

It's easier to slice or shred cheeses before freezing rather than after. Freeze small portions of grated cheese in a double layer of zip-top bags. Tightly wrap individual pieces of cheese in foil first and then put them in zip-top bags. To defrost frozen cheese, thaw it for at least 24 hours in the refrigerator. Don't thaw the cheese at room temperature, as it will defrost unevenly and may become moist, slimy, and very crumbly.

Robert Aschebrock is a former grader of butter and cheese for the USDA. He is now a consultant for other cheese graders. ♦

Do you have a question of general interest about cooking? Send it to Q&A, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506, or by e-mail to fc@taunton.com, and we'll find a cooking professional with the answer.



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READER SERVICE NO. 101



Part of Susan's cookbook collection frames the kitchen doorway.

A compact kitchen with room to work

BY AMY ALBERT

As a native New Yorker, Susan Friedland is accustomed to space being at a premium. A longtime cookbook editor and an avid home cook, Susan is a cookbook author, too: She has written five books out of this tiny galley kitchen, which measures just seven by eleven feet. "I actually think the limited space helps me," she says. "Everything is right *there*."

A big, single sink that's an extension of the soapstone countertop is one of Susan's favorite details. "My dining table is right outside the kitchen, and this sink is deep enough to hide dirty dishes—along with the chaos that is a kitchen in the throes of a dinner party."

Amy Albert is Fine Cooking's senior editor. ♦

Making use of every inch



A hanging dish rack allows for more work area and lets wet dishes drip right into the sink.



Set into the counter and against the backsplash, knives are handy, yet out of the way.



A glass shelf under the range hood makes space for a salt dish and other small containers.

Small details make a big difference



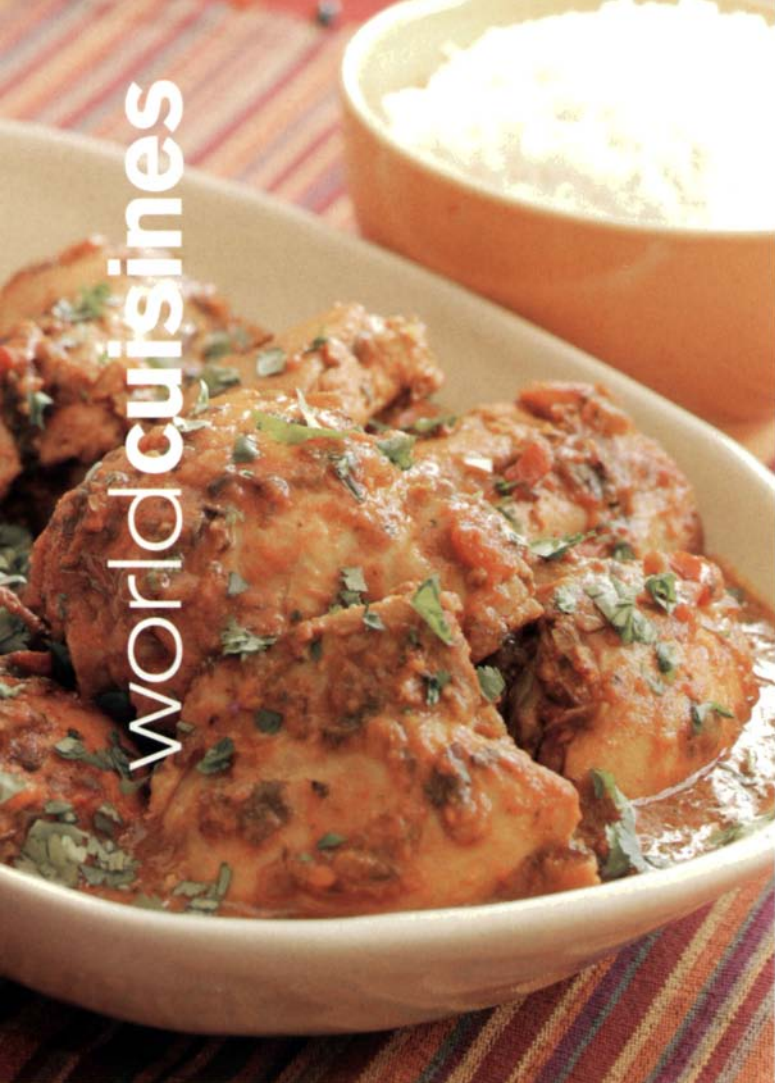
Pots hang from a ceiling rack made of simple tubing.



The countertop's bullnosed edge matches that of the stove, making for a sleek, continuous line.



A pull-out shelf makes heavy items like cast-iron pots easier to grab.



The Quintessential North Indian Chicken Curry

BY SUNEETA VASWANI

If you love the curry dishes at Indian restaurants but have always assumed that they would be too complicated to make at home, I've got the recipe for you. The dish below is a typical North Indian chicken curry, and it's a breeze to make. All the ingredients are available at the supermarket, and the whole dish takes only about 50 minutes to cook, start to finish.

India is a vast, diverse country with many different cuisines, but curries are a unifying element. Yogurt-based curries appear in the west, coconut milk curries are common in coastal areas, and tomato-and-onion-based curries like the one below are typical of the

north. The common thread in all Indian curries is the method—it's essentially a braised dish with a flavorful sauce generated by a unique mixture of spices and herbs.

In tomato-onion curries, the key step is browning the onions. The caramelized onions play two roles: They flavor the curry, and they thicken the sauce as they dissolve partially during cooking. You start them over fairly high heat, stirring to coat them with oil. Then you spread them in an even layer and let them cook undisturbed for a couple of minutes. Then you stir, spread again, and cook for another two minutes. By this point, they'll have begun to brown, and you

North Indian Chicken Curry

Serves five to six.

This is a moderately spicy curry. If you're sensitive to heat, cut back on the chiles and cayenne.

- 2 tablespoons canola or peanut oil**
- 2 cups finely chopped onions (from 2 medium onions)**
- 1 cup plain nonfat yogurt, at room temperature**
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch**
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh ginger**
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic**
- 1 to 2 hot fresh green chiles (preferably serranos), minced**
- 4 pounds bone-in chicken thighs (10 to 12), skin and excess fat removed**
- 1 tablespoon ground coriander**
- 1½ teaspoons ground cumin**
- ¾ teaspoon turmeric**
- ¾ teaspoon cayenne**
- 1 28-ounce can whole peeled tomatoes, chopped, with their juices**
- ½ cup chopped fresh cilantro leaves; more for garnish**

2 teaspoons kosher salt; more to taste

1½ teaspoons garam masala (look for it in the supermarket spice aisle or make your own using the recipe at right)

Heat the oil in a Dutch oven or a deep, wide saucepan set over medium-high heat. Add the onions and stir to coat them with the oil. Spread them in an even layer and cook for 2 minutes. Stir well, rearrange in an even layer again, and cook for 2 minutes; the onions should have begun to brown at the edges. Reduce the heat to medium and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onions are a rich brown, another 10 to 12 minutes. Lower the heat if necessary so the onions caramelize but don't burn.

Meanwhile, put the yogurt in a small bowl, stirring until it's creamy. Add the cornstarch and mix well.

Add the ginger, garlic, and chiles to the onions. Cook over medium heat, stirring frequently, for 2 minutes so they meld with the onions. Add all the chicken thighs and cook, stirring occasionally, until they lose their raw color and begin to brown, 5 to 6 minutes. Lower the heat to medium low and add the coriander, cumin, turmeric, and cayenne. Cook for 2 minutes, stirring frequently and scraping the bottom of the pan.

Add the tomatoes and their juices, the yogurt mixture, the chopped cilantro, and the salt. Stir well, cover with a tight-fitting lid, and bring to a boil. Lower the heat and simmer until the chicken is cooked through, 20 to 25 minutes. Remove from the heat and taste for salt.

To serve, sprinkle on the garam masala, transfer to a serving dish, and garnish with more chopped cilantro.

tip

You can freeze this curry, in which case you shouldn't add the garam masala and cilantro garnish. Thaw the curry in the fridge and re-heat over low heat. Then sprinkle with the garam masala and a little ground cumin, cover, and let sit for a few minutes to let the aroma infuse the curry. Transfer to a serving dish and sprinkle with the chopped cilantro.

Key ingredients for North Indian curry

Garam masala

Garam means “warm” and masala means “mixture.”

Garam masala is a blend of several warming, aromatic spices that are ground together and used in many North Indian dishes (South Indian cuisine has its own signature combination of spices). Cooks tend to use garam masala judiciously, and they typically add it toward the end of cooking to infuse a dish with its distinctive aroma.

A basic garam masala might consist of ground coriander seeds, cumin seeds, peppercorns, cinnamon, cloves, and green cardamom (see the recipe at left). Proportions vary. Some Indian families have been handing down their garam masala recipe for generations, guarding it as they would a family heirloom.

Indian markets usually carry several brands of garam masala, and McCormick now offers it in its line of specialty spices (for more sources, see p. 80). Buy it in small quantities. Kept in a cool, dark place, it will stay fragrant for up to four months.



Tomato, onion, ginger, and garlic masala

The combination of tomatoes, onions, ginger, and garlic forms the base of many North Indian curries. As the vegetables brown and break down, they turn into a dark, richly flavored mass that acts as a natural thickener for the curry. This mixture, or masala, is the background canvas for hundreds of curries; by simply changing the combination of spices or other ingredients, the cook can take the curry in whatever direction she or he wants.



can reduce the heat and continue cooking until they become a dark-brown mass. The deeply caramelized onions combine with tomatoes to give this curry a remarkable depth of flavor and rich brown color—the marks of an outstanding chicken curry.

I serve this dish with basmati rice (see p. 74) or Indian bread (for recipes, go to www.finecooking.com and click on Online Extras), accompanied by lightly spiced vegetables or a yogurt salad, called a raita. To make a basic raita, peel and dice a small cucumber and fold it into a cup of plain yogurt. Season to taste with salt, pepper, and a dash of ground cumin.

Garam Masala

Yields 1 tablespoon.

Garam masala is best when made with whole spices, but ground spices are fine. This recipe makes enough for a couple of chicken curry recipes; you can double or triple it if you like. Store it in an airtight container. Although the mixture starts to lose its aroma within weeks, it will be usable for up to four months.

- ¾ teaspoon coriander seeds (or ¾ teaspoon ground)**
- ½ teaspoon cumin seeds (or ¼ teaspoon ground)**
- 10 black peppercorns (or ½ teaspoon finely ground)**
- 1-inch stick cinnamon (or ½ teaspoon ground)**
- 4 to 5 whole green cardamom pods (or ¼ teaspoon ground)**
- 4 whole cloves (or ½ teaspoon ground)**

Toast the coriander and cumin in a dry skillet until aromatic. Put them in a spice grinder or a coffee mill, add all the remaining ingredients, and grind to a powder.

Plain yogurt

Indian cooks rely on yogurt for its marvelous ability to marinate meats, keep foods moist during lengthy cooking, make curries creamy, and deliver tangy flavor. In this curry recipe, it's being used primarily for flavor and texture.

In the tropical climate of India, most families still make their own yogurt, setting it out at night for use the next day. Homemade yogurt is more tangy and refreshing, but if they choose to buy it, they'll pick a plain or lightly sweetened yogurt.

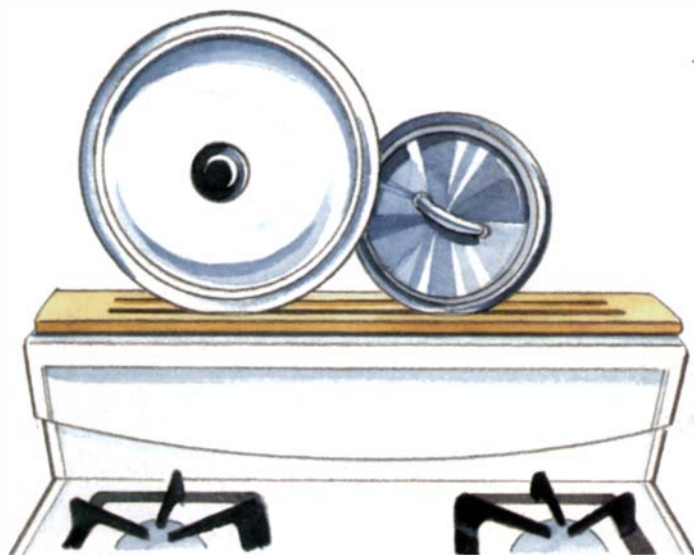


Books

To learn more about Indian cooking, Suneeta Vaswani recommends the following books:

- ❖ *Classic Indian Cooking*, by Julie Sahni
- ❖ *An Invitation to Indian Cooking*, by Madhur Jaffrey
- ❖ *The Art of Indian Vegetarian Cooking*, by Yamuna Devi

Suneeta Vaswani, a cooking instructor living in Houston, is writing her first cookbook. ♦



WINNING TIP

Create a spot for hot pot lids

To solve the problem of where to put hot, dripping pot lids, I made a lid rack for the back of my stove. I cut a piece of wood the width and length of my stove and put a few grooves in it. I rest the grooved board on the back of my stove and set pot lids there when they're still hot. Storing the hot lids on their sides allows condensation to drain off so I avoid burning myself, plus it keeps my limited counter space clear.

—Howard Cheung, via e-mail

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A stylish way to serve deviled eggs

Deviled eggs are a timeless favorite, but they tend to tip over on a platter. I like to serve deviled eggs on a bed of mixed whole olives that have been tossed in extra-virgin olive oil and fresh herbs. The olives provide a colorful, pebbly nest that helps keep the eggs upright, and the match is even more delicious when I add some chopped olives or olive tapenade to the egg stuffing mixture.

—Heather Lee, Lafayette, California

New uses for leftover pear poaching syrup

I noticed that author Arlene Jacobs discarded the leftover syrup after poaching pears for her Crisp Pear Strudel recipe (see *Fine Cooking* #55, p. 46). There's no need to toss it, as this delicious, pear-flavored liquid—spiced with vanilla, lemon, and ginger—can be strained and

made into one of a trio of refreshing frozen desserts. Freeze the syrup in a wide, shallow bowl and scrape it to make a granita; pour it into an ice-cream maker to make sorbet; or freeze the syrup in paper cups and add wooden sticks to make popsicles.

—Peter Callis, via e-mail

Make less of a mess with your stand mixer

I have a large stand mixer with metal arms that hold the work bowl in place. When I do a mixing job that involves adding ingredients while the mixer is running, I always put a large sheet of waxed paper between the bowl and the base of the mixer to catch any spills and to keep the mixer base clean. I make sure the sheet is large enough to cover several inches of counter space on either side of the mixer. This helps keep cleanup to a minimum.

—Marian Cabello, Portland, Oregon

Perfectly shaped patties for pan-frying

To make uniform, round crab cakes, potato cakes, or falafel patties, use a two-piece lid from a Ball canning jar. Fill and pack the lid with the mix. Then shave off the excess with the back of a knife. Push up on the removable disk of the lid to get the patty out, slide it off the lid, and it's ready for pan frying.

—Bill Kasenchar, via e-mail

List farmers' market buys for easy meal planning

I love going to my local farmers' market but there's so much beautiful produce to choose from that I often come home with much more than I need. To keep from wasting any of those fruits, vegetables and herbs, I keep a running list on my refrigerator door of everything I bought, when I bought it, and the quantity. Glancing at the list helps me quickly plan sum-

mer meals that take full advantage of all that produce while it's fresh.

—Colleen Lanigan Ambrose,
Seal Beach, California

An unconventional way to start charcoal

I buy cheap, bulk bags of unseasoned potato chips from my local warehouse store to light the charcoal for my grill. The chips are more affordable than fire-starting bricks, and they usually don't taste very good, so I don't feel bad about burning them. The grease-soaked chips have a large surface area to volume ratio, and they burn hot enough to start even hardwood charcoal thoroughly. Unlike lighter fluid, potato chips don't contain any harmful additives, and this is also a great way to get rid of old, stale chips. Just put a generous layer of potato chips under the coals and light them in various places. If you use a chimney charcoal starter, put a sheet of newspaper on the bottom grate, followed by the chips and then the charcoal; this prevents the smaller chips from falling through the grate.

—Austin Liu,
San Leandro, California

Less greasy eggplant

I like to brush a bit of egg white on eggplant slices before pan frying them or oiling them for the grill; this seals the cut surfaces of the eggplant and prevents them from absorbing a lot of oil.

—Leyla Ghorbani,
via e-mail

Boil potatoes and eggs together for potato salad

When I make potato salad, I find it convenient to start boiling the potatoes in a stainless-steel pot and then add the eggs to the same pot after 15 minutes. Once the potatoes are tender, I drain



off the water and leave both the potatoes and eggs in the pot to cool. When they're cool enough to handle, I peel and dice them, add mayonnaise and seasonings, and mix them in the same pot. Then I transfer the finished potato salad to a serving bowl. One less pot and bowl to clean.

—Kathy Walden,
Rock Hill, South Carolina

Peach canning shortcut

I'm lucky to live near several peach orchards, and I love to can these plentiful summer peaches for use in desserts and crisps during the winter. When canning peaches, I peel and pit the fruit and, instead of keeping a pot of hot sugar syrup on the stove to fill the jars, I put $\frac{1}{3}$ cup sugar in the bottom of each sterilized jar, add the peaches, and fill the jar with boiling water, leaving $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of headspace at the top. Then I process the jars 10 minutes longer than usual (to finish dissolving the sugar) in a boiling-water canner. This saves me a lot of sticky cleanup from the sugar syrup and reduces a step in the canning process. The sugar ultimately dissolves, and the result is a beautiful jar of summer fruit.

—Laura Dean,
via e-mail

Fill a pepper mill with seafood-friendly spices

Two of the least-used spices in my spice rack are whole fennel and coriander seed, even though I love their flavors. These two spices are wonderful on fish and seafood, but they're seldom called for in recipes. In an effort to use them up, I filled a spare pepper mill with the fennel and coriander seeds, plus some whole black peppercorns, and put the (labeled) pepper mill beside my stove. Now I reach for my special pepper mill whenever I'm cooking seafood, which is quite often. This wonderful seasoning has even found its way to the dining room table, where it's a nice addition to vegetables and salads.

—Sheila Kerr,
Mansonville, Quebec

A tea infuser doubles as a sugar or spice shaker

While looking for a sifter to dust some paprika over my chicken, I picked up my spring-loaded tea infuser instead. I dipped the infuser into my jar of paprika and shook it over the chicken. It did a great job, distributing just the right amount of paprika with no mess. Then I tried it with confectioners' sugar and it worked just as well. To clean the infuser, just give it a quick rinse under the tap.

—Genevieve Jaskiewicz,
Stoney Creek, Ontario



Grate and season breadcrumbs in one step

When making breadcrumbs in my food processor, I add some freshly washed herbs and seasonings in with the stale bread before turning on the machine. This eliminates the second step of adding seasonings, and the breadcrumbs absorb any moisture left on the herbs.

—Nancy J. Cruz,
East Providence, Rhode Island ♦

Screw Caps Shed Their Cheap Reputation

BY TIM GAISER

If you've shopped for wine lately, you may have noticed that bottles you'd actually consider buying are sporting a screw cap rather than a cork. What's going on here? The screw cap is getting respectable. For centuries, cork has been the stopper of choice for sealing wine, but it's far from perfect, which is why screw-cap wine bottles could be more than a passing thing.

True cork has history

Cork comes from the bark of a particular species of oak, with most cork-producing trees in Portugal, Spain, and Algeria. After the actual corks are cut, they're rinsed, most often in hydrogen peroxide or chlorine. While this bleaches the cork to a uniform color and rids it of mold, it can also create problems.

When a wine is "corked," residual bleach is the culprit. A compound called trichloranisole (TCA), which taints the finished wine, can result. If you've ever smelled a musty, wet-cardboard odor when tasting wine, you know what I mean. (If you haven't, chances are you will: it's estimated that 2 to 10 percent of all cork-finished wines are affected by TCA.)

Synthetic corks solve one problem but may cause others

A growing number of wineries are using alternatives to natural cork.

Synthetic corks made of polymer were originally thought to be the answer to TCA spoilage. But they're turning out to cause problems, too. Peter Bell, winemaker at Fox Run Vineyards in New York's Finger Lakes region, says that synthetic corks seem to admit more oxygen than a natural cork. "Wines that I know to be delicious with beautiful aromas seem to lose those qualities more quickly under synthetic cork," he says. Bell has found that Riesling and Pinot Noir seem to be more vulnerable than Cabernet Sauvignon or Chardonnay.

Composite corks are made from natural cork particles held together by a binder. While some are easy to remove and leave no trace elements in the wine, the worm on the corkscrew can cause the cork to crumble, leaving particles in the wine. And the binder, say many winemakers, imparts an odor to the wine.

Screw caps are gaining ground

Despite its association with bad wine, the screw cap (also known

Screw-cap wines you'll want to drink

Retail prices are approximate.

Australia

- ❖ Rosemount Estate 2002 Diamond Riesling, \$9
- ❖ Wynns Coonawarra Estate 2002 Riesling, \$12
- ❖ 2002 Jacob's Creek Reserve Riesling, \$13
- ❖ 2002 Annie's Lane Riesling, \$14
- ❖ 2002 Wolf Blass Gold Label Riesling, \$14
- ❖ Penfolds Eden Valley 2002 Riesling, \$18
- ❖ 2002 Mount Horrocks Riesling, \$21

- ❖ 2002 Grosset Polish Hill Riesling, \$30

California

- ❖ Bonny Doon Ca' del Solo 2002 Big House White, \$10
- ❖ Bonny Doon Ca' del Solo 2002 Big House Red, \$10
- ❖ Bonny Doon Clos de Gilroy, \$12
- ❖ Bonny Doon Old Telegram 2002, \$30
- ❖ Sonoma-Cutrer 1999 Founder's Reserve, \$65
- ❖ PlumpJack Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve 1999, \$165

by the trademark name, Stelvin) is probably the most effective way to seal a bottle of wine, as it's airtight and leaves little chance for contamination.

Wineries especially keen on screw caps use them for premium wines. Winemakers in New Zealand and Australia are particularly enthusiastic. In the United States, wineries in both Oregon and California are starting to embrace screw caps, in particular, California's Bonny Doon Vineyard winemaker Randall Grahm, who admits that he's "privileged to have customers who are open-minded to experimentation and innovation."

"A lot lies in the package design," says Michael Skurnik, a wine importer who carries premium screw-cap wines. "The bottles needn't look down-market." (Some winelists denote screw-cap bottles as "cork free.")

But can wine breathe without a cork?

Some worry that a screw cap, which is airtight, will arrest aging, arguing that cork, porous and flexible, can let minute amounts of oxygen into the bottle. Ed Sbragia, chief wine-

maker of Beringer vineyards in the Napa Valley, says he's reluctant to change until there's something that works as well as a cork. "I think of wine as a living, breathing thing, and I believe it benefits when a good-quality cork is used." But Vernon Singleton, professor emeritus of enology at the University of California at Davis, says that a properly corked bottle admits little if any oxygen. The good effects of bottle aging, he contends, depend on slow-term changes that happen without oxygen. For now, the debate goes on.

In my opinion, screw caps are appropriate for less expensive wines meant to be drunk within a year or so. But, as both a sommelier and a wine drinker, I'm reluctant to give up the uncorking and decanting rituals that go along with an aged bottle of fine wine. So, despite the problems inherent in cork, I think it will be a while before we say goodbye to this time-honored method of stoppering a wine bottle.

Tim Gaiser, a master sommelier, is a contributing editor to Fine Cooking. He lives in San Francisco. ♦

France

- ❖ Paul Blanck 2001 Alsace Pinot Blanc, \$14

New Zealand

- ❖ Villa Maria Private Bin 2002 Sauvignon Blanc, \$12
- ❖ Lawson's Dry Hills 2002 Sauvignon Blanc, \$13
- ❖ Jackson Estate 2002 Sauvignon Blanc, \$14
- ❖ Kim Crawford 2002 Sauvignon Blanc, \$17
- ❖ Kim Crawford 2002 Chardonnay, \$17

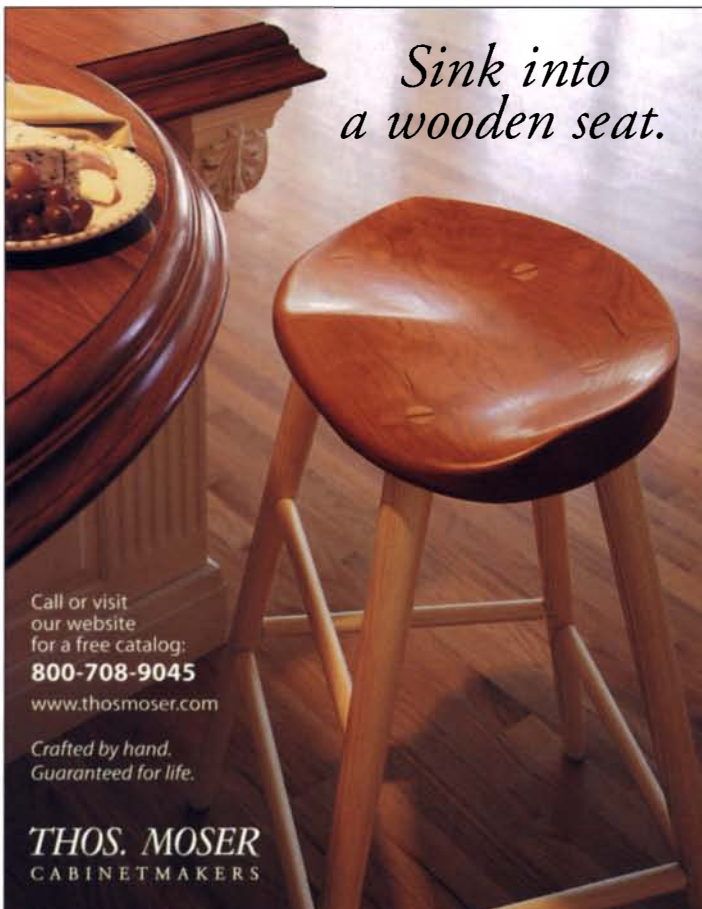
- ❖ Wairau River 2002 Sauvignon Blanc, \$18

- ❖ Kumeu River 2001 Chardonnay, \$25

- ❖ Felton Road 2001 Pinot Noir, \$35
- ❖ Villa Maria Reserve 2002 Pinot Noir, \$35

Oregon

- ❖ 2001 Willakenzie Estate Pinot Blanc, \$18
- ❖ 2001 Willakenzie Estate Pinot Noir, \$25
- ❖ 2001 Argyle Merlot, \$30
- ❖ 2001 Argyle Syrah, \$30



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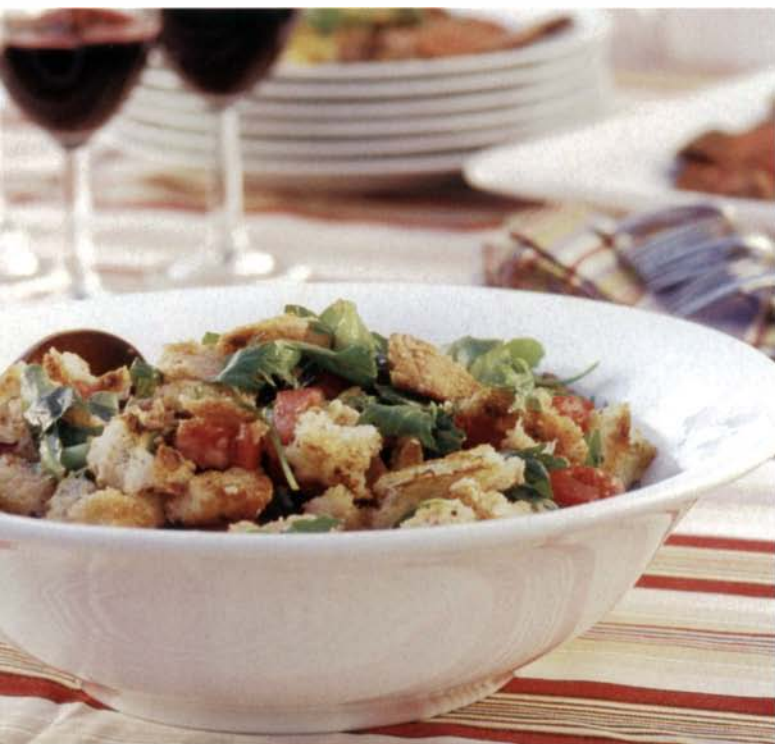
READER SERVICE NO. 31

Dinner with friends

Grill a Great Steak



for a Crowd



A juicy top sirloin—paired with seasonal salads—is the perfect fare for a casual summer meal

BY MOLLY STEVENS

There are few things I enjoy more than spending a long summer evening sharing a meal with friends on a breezy porch or around a picnic table. In planning the menu for a night like this, I keep in mind that I'll want to be outside lazing about as much as my guests, so I plan on lighting up the grill, and I try to avoid too much last-minute fussing.

A large sirloin steak is ideal for a casual summer dinner. It's affordable and tasty, and because of its Flintstonian proportions, you can serve six people with it. To go with the sirloin, I make a couple of simple salads full of seasonal ingredients—tomatoes, greens, and bell peppers—and a creamy dessert that shows off ripe seasonal fruit.

Season the steak ahead and surround it with good, fresh vegetables

I've learned that a key step to giving a steak great flavor is seasoning it ahead of time—in fact, a good 24 hours in advance. I season it generously, too—about 1½ teaspoons of kosher salt for a 3-pound steak. While this technique counters the salt-at-the-last-minute theory that many of us have learned, it does amazing things for the savor of the meat, trust me. *(Continued)*

Menu

Grilled Top Sirloin with Wine-Braised Shallots

Grilled Bread Salad with Tomatoes & Spicy Greens

Roasted Red & Yellow Pepper Salad

Zabaglione with Summer Fruit

Instead of messing around with tricky sauces for the steak, I make a compote of shallots braised in red wine. It's a great complement to the steak and can be made up to a week in advance.

Next, I think about what's good at the farmstand at the moment, since the better the produce, the less work is required of the cook. The grilled bread salad I've included here makes the most of ripe tomatoes and sharp salad greens, and grilling the bread is in keeping with the outdoor feel of the menu. The colorful bell pepper salad is a flexible dish. You can roast the peppers a few days ahead if you like, and then just bring them to room temperature and drizzle them with a simple red-wine vinaigrette right before your guests arrive.

For dessert, I make my own version of zabaglione (pronounced zah-bahl-YOH-nay), an Italian mousse-like custard, and spoon it over ripe berries or peaches. Although it isn't traditional, I add a bit of gelatin to the custard so that I can make it a day in advance. If your schedule allows you to make the zabaglione within a few hours of your party, skip the gelatin.



Buying a top sirloin

Selecting the right cut of meat for this meal requires some care since sirloin is a very general label that refers to a range of different steaks. The best part of the sirloin is the top sirloin, also called top butt, center-cut sirloin, or hip sirloin. Steer away from cuts labeled bottom sirloin or bottom butt. Be sure to buy a steak that's at least 1½ inches thick—any thinner and it will grill too quickly and become dry and overdone. Also be sure to get choice grade (or prime, if you're feeling flush) and not select. I find that certified Black Angus or other specialty brands can be another assurance of good-quality meat.

Grilled Top Sirloin

Serves six.

Figure 5 to 7 ounces of steak per person. Buy two smaller steaks if you can't find one big enough to serve six. If you aren't able to season the meat at least 12 hours in advance, do it right before cooking, but use only ¾ teaspoon kosher salt.

2½- to 3-pound top sirloin steak, 1½ to 2 inches thick

1½ teaspoons kosher salt; more as needed

Olive or vegetable oil

Freshly ground black pepper (optional)

Shallots Braised in Red Wine (see the recipe opposite)

The day or morning before you plan to cook the steak, sprinkle both sides of it with the salt. Set it on a large plate, cover loosely (waxed paper works well), and refrigerate for 12 to 24 hours.

About an hour before you're ready to cook, remove the steak from the refrigerator. Prepare a medium-hot charcoal fire or heat a gas grill to medium high. Wipe the steak dry with paper towels, coat very lightly with oil, and season with pepper if you like. Put the steak on the grill, watching for flare-ups especially when cooking the first side. (If the flames threaten to char the entire steak, move it off to the side

for a few moments until the fire calms.) Grill 8 to 9 minutes per side for medium rare, a minute or two longer per side for medium. Check for doneness by making a small cut into the steak and peeking—if the meat looks a shade less done than you like, it's ready. Move the steak to a carving board, cover loosely with foil, and let rest for 5 minutes (it will continue to cook a bit more).

To serve, either carve the steak into six pieces or into ¼-inch slices (see the sidebar above right). Spoon any collected juices onto the meat and top each serving with the braised shallots.

Thin slices or smaller steaks

When it comes to carving the steak, there are two options, and I choose one or the other depending on my mood and the crowd. Sometimes it's nice to serve everyone his or her own piece of steak—just be sure to set the table with good steak knives. Other times, I'll carve the entire steak into thin slices. This tends to work best if you're serving buffet style or if you have a mix of light and big eaters. Also, since top sirloin is a meaty and flavorful cut, but not quite as tender as some steaks, slicing it thinly is a good option.



Shallots Braised in Red Wine

Serves six.

Any leftover braised shallots will make a wonderful topping for bruschetta or sandwiches.

1 pound shallots
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 tablespoons Cognac
½ cup dry red wine (such as Syrah or Zinfandel)
1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves, plus ½ teaspoon lightly chopped thyme leaves
¼ teaspoon red-wine vinegar; more to taste

Trim and peel the shallots (keep some of the root end intact to hold them together during cooking) and separate or cut any large ones in two. Heat the butter in a medium skillet over medium-high heat. Add the shallots and season with salt and pepper. Cook, tossing frequently, until brown in spots and fragrant, 3 to 5 minutes. Add the Cognac. If you're cooking over gas, tilt the pan to ignite the brandy. On an electric stove, hold a match to the pan to light the brandy. Let the flames die down and then cook until there's only a glaze in the bottom of the pan. Add the wine and the 1 teaspoon thyme leaves, bring to a

simmer, reduce the heat to medium-low, and cover. Cook until the shallots are completely soft and falling apart, 40 to 45 minutes (check every 5 minutes to be sure the pan isn't dry; add up to 2 tablespoons water as needed each time). Uncover and reduce any excess liquid to a glaze over medium heat. Stir and taste for seasoning. Reserve at room temperature for a couple of hours or refrigerate if making farther ahead.

To serve with the steak, stir the chopped thyme into the shallots and bring to room temperature if they've been refrigerated. Season to taste with the vinegar.

Timeline

A few days before:

- ❖ **Braise the shallots.**
- ❖ **Roast and peel the peppers.**

The night before:

- ❖ **Salt the steak.**
- ❖ **Make the zabaglione.**

An hour before serving:

- ❖ **Let the peppers come to room temperature and dress them.**
- ❖ **Let the braised shallots come to room temperature.**
- ❖ **Slice the bread for the salad.**
- ❖ **Make the tomato-scallion mixture for the bread salad.**
- ❖ **Slice the fruit and crush the cookies for dessert.**

Half an hour before serving:

- ❖ **Grill the steak and the bread.**
- ❖ **Let the steak rest while you assemble the bread salad.**



Grilled Bread Salad with Tomatoes & Spicy Greens

Serves six.

The best greens for this salad are something peppery but not too rugged, such as arugula, mizuna, or baby mustard greens. If the greens are long, tear them into 2- to 3-inch pieces. Grill the bread alongside the steak and then assemble the salad while the meat is resting.

3 tablespoons dry vermouth
1 teaspoon grated lemon zest
½ teaspoon ground coriander
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 pound juicy ripe tomatoes (about 3 medium), cored and cut into 1-inch pieces
4 scallions, white and green parts, thinly sliced on the diagonal
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil; more for the bread
10 to 12 ounces day-old crusty country bread (not sourdough)
1 clove garlic, cut in half crosswise
1 cup basil leaves, torn
2 cups spicy greens, such as arugula, mizuna, or baby mustard greens
¼ cup pine nuts, lightly toasted

In a medium bowl, stir together the vermouth, lemon zest, coriander, and ½ teaspoon salt. Add the tomatoes and scallions. Stir in the olive oil and set aside for up to an hour.

If you're making this salad without the rest of the menu, prepare a charcoal grill so it's medium-hot or heat a gas grill to medium-high. If you're cooking the steak, use the same fire to grill the bread.

Cut the crust off the bread; don't worry about removing all of it, just the heaviest, chewiest parts. Cut the loaf lengthwise into ¾-inch slices. Brush the slices lightly with olive oil and grill them around the perimeter of the fire until uniformly golden, about 4 minutes per side. Avoid charring the edges as best you can. Remove the bread and rub all sides with the cut face of the garlic.

To assemble the salad, tear or chop the bread into ¾-inch pieces and put them in a large salad bowl. Add the basil and greens and then the seasoned tomato-scallion mixture. Toss gently with a large spoon to combine. Season with salt and a few generous grinds of black pepper. Add the pine nuts, toss, and serve.

Roasted Red & Yellow Pepper Salad

Serves six.

This is the time to pull out your best extra-virgin olive oil. The peppers can be roasted, peeled, and seeded several days before you make the salad. If you can't find yellow peppers, use all red.

2 red bell peppers
2 yellow bell peppers
2 teaspoons red-wine vinegar
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil; more as needed
1 tablespoon capers, rinsed and coarsely chopped
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 to 3 tablespoons roughly chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

Roast the peppers on a hot grill, over a gas burner (hold with tongs), or on a baking sheet under the broiler, turning frequently, until blistered and charred all over. Put the hot peppers in a glass or metal bowl, cover tightly with plastic wrap, and let steam until cool enough to handle, 15 to 20 minutes. Slip the skins off the

peppers with your hands. To remove any charred specks, hold a peeled pepper over the sink with one hand, run the faucet and wet your other hand and use it to wipe the sides of the pepper, frequently cleaning your hand. (This avoids the flavor-flushing step of running the water directly over the pepper.)

When all the peppers are cleaned, set them on a cutting board and cut each in half. Remove the seeds and stems and flatten the pepper. Cut the flesh into strips about 2 inches wide. The peppers can be prepared ahead to this point and piled into a bowl, drizzled with a bit of olive oil, and refrigerated for a few days.

To serve, arrange the pepper strips on a serving platter; if you've refrigerated them, take them out an hour before serving. Whisk together the vinegar, 3 tablespoons of the oil, and the capers; season with salt and pepper. Pour the dressing over the peppers and scatter on the parsley. Serve immediately or let sit for an hour or two.



Peel off the pepper skin with a wet hand. By moistening your hand, rather than the pepper, with running water, you won't wash away the pepper's sweet flavor.



Finish the pepper salad with a sprinkling of fresh parsley. You can prepare the peppers days ahead and refrigerate. Let them come to room temperature before serving.

Zabaglione with Summer Fruit

Serves six.

Classic zabaglione is made with dry Marsala, but I like the way a spicy, floral Riesling pairs with ripe summer fruit. Look for an Alsatian-style dry or off-dry Riesling, or try Champagne, Sauternes, Vouvray, or Marsala, varying the amount of sugar to balance the sweetness of the wine.

4 large egg yolks

¼ cup granulated sugar
(or up to ½ cup if using a wine that isn't as sweet)

½ cup Riesling (see the note above)

½ teaspoon unflavored powdered gelatin,
softened in 1 tablespoon water (optional;
see the note at right)

1 tablespoon boiling water

1 cup whipping cream

1 tablespoon Amaretto
or brandy, or to taste

4 to 5 cups peeled, sliced summer fruit, like a mix of peaches, nectarines, and berries

⅓ cup crushed almond macaroons or biscotti
(or 6 Amaretti di Saronno cookies, crumbled)

Fill a large bowl halfway with ice water. Set a large metal bowl on top of a pan of barely simmering water over medium-low heat (the water level should be about 2 inches below the bottom of the bowl). Put the yolks and sugar in the bowl and whisk vigorously until the yolks begin to thicken and lighten in color. Pour in the Riesling and continue whisking until the mixture is thick enough so that the whisk leaves a trail as it passes through the mixture. This may take 5 to 10 minutes, depending on the heat of the water. Remove from the heat and whisk for another minute or so.

In a small bowl, dissolve the softened gelatin in the boiling water. Slowly whisk this into the zabaglione. Set the custard bowl over the ice-water bath to cool while you whip the cream to stiff peaks. With a rubber spatula, fold the whipped cream and liqueur into the custard. Refrigerate for at least 4 hours but no more than 24 hours.

To serve, arrange the fruit in six parfait glasses or dessert bowls. Spoon

the zabaglione over the fruit and garnish with the cookie crumbs.

Note: The gelatin prevents the zabaglione from separating in the refrigerator and lets you make the dessert up to a day ahead. If you plan to make the dessert the day you serve it, you can omit the gelatin, but be sure to chill the custard for 2 hours.



Look for the trail. Whip the zabaglione in a bowl set over a pot of simmering water until the whisk's wires leave a trail.



Molly Stevens is a contributing editor to *Fine Cooking* and a co-author of *One Potato, Two Potato*. ♦



wine choices

Start with rosé and move on to a full-bodied red

If you're inclined to serve wine as an *apéritif*, a tangy, dry rosé or blush wine would be just the thing. (And if you happen to have some left in your glass, it goes well with the tomato and grilled bread salad, too.) Try the 2001 Vin Gris de Cigare from Bonny Doon Vineyard in California (\$10) or the 2001 Château Routas Rosé (\$10) from France's Languedoc region.

Moving to the main course, a lush, spicy red would be delicious and an especially good match for the grilled sirloin and the roasted pepper salad. Look for

the 2002 Rosemount Estate Shiraz Cabernet from Australia (\$8) or the 2001 Altos las Hormigas Malbec from Argentina (\$10).

Come dessert, reach for a wine that's as sweet as or sweeter than the zabaglione itself. My choice would be the 2000 Elderton Botrytis Semillon from Australia (\$19 for a 375ml bottle) or the 2001 King Estate Pinot Gris Vin Glacé from Oregon (\$18 for a 375ml bottle).

Tim Gaiser, a master sommelier, is a contributing editor to Fine Cooking. Retail prices are approximate.

Making the Best



Brush on olive oil

A light coating of oil flavors the bread and helps it toast evenly.



Rub with garlic

Use the cut side of a garlic clove for extra flavor, and then drizzle with a fruity olive oil or top as you please.

Grill until crisp and golden

For nice grill marks, be sure your grill and the grate are heated thoroughly before cooking.

BY TASHA PRYSI

I love hors d'oeuvres, and yet I struggle with them every time I'm planning a menu. What can I make that people can eat while they mingle, that will please everyone's tastes, and that won't keep me holed up in the kitchen? Thankfully, Italians came up with the answer: bruschetta. It's a brilliantly simple concept for summer entertaining. You toast good bread on the grill, rub it with a clove of garlic, and drizzle on your best extra-virgin olive oil. It's that simple, and if you haven't tried this before, believe

me, grilled bread with garlic and olive oil is plenty delicious. But there's no need to stop there. Instead of, or in addition to, the garlic and oil, I prepare a bunch of toppings for the grilled bread, anything from the traditional tomato, basil, and mozzarella combo to something more unexpected, like a fig and walnut spread.

A trio of bruschetta (pronounced broo-SKET-tah) is an excellent way to begin a casual outdoor party, especially if you're serving grilled food anyway, and it's easy to carry off if you're organized. But

bruschetta doesn't just have to be a starter—it can be a great component of a casual summer menu, too.

The key to stress-free entertaining at the grill is to act as though you're setting up camp. Once I'm in the backyard, I'd rather not scurry in and out of the house trying to pull together a meal out of two kitchens. Prepare as much as you can inside, and then move everything else you'll need outside: cutting board, bread knife, olive oil, salt, pepper, baking sheets, serving platters, and all of your toppings. All

Bruschetta



Basic Bruschetta

Serves eight to ten.

1-pound loaf rustic country bread or crusty baguette, sliced ½ inch thick (cut baguettes on the diagonal)
Extra-virgin olive oil as needed, about ½ cup
1 to 2 cloves garlic, peeled and halved (optional)
Toppings (optional; see the recipes below and on the following pages)

Coat one or two rimmed baking sheets with olive oil and set the bread slices on top in a single layer. Brush the tops with a little more oil and set aside until you're ready to grill.

Light a charcoal fire and heat it until you can hold your hand above the grate for no more than 2 seconds or heat a gas grill to medium high. Grill the bread until one side has dark grill marks or is a deep golden brown all over and then turn to toast the other side. As soon as the slices are done, rub with the cut side of the garlic, if using, and drizzle with more oil, or add a topping. Cut into serving-size pieces and serve right away.

you'll need to do as the bread comes off the grill is add the final touches and pass them or set them out for your guests.

Traditional bruschetta is served just like this, hot off the grill. You can always grill the bread in advance (and truth be told, you can even toast it under the broiler) if timing or space on the grill is an issue, but I think you'll find that freshly grilled bruschetta—with bread that's warm, crisp, and lightly charred outside and still chewy inside—makes all the difference.

Chopped Tomato with Garlic & Basil

Yields about 3 cups.

1½ pounds ripe tomatoes (about 5), cut into ¼-inch dice
Kosher salt
Pinch cayenne
1 clove garlic, mashed to a paste with a pinch of salt (use a mortar and pestle or a knife)
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
2 leafy sprigs basil, leaves picked and torn or roughly chopped

Season the tomatoes well with salt and put them in a colander to drain for 5 to 10 minutes. Transfer the tomatoes to a bowl and fold in the cayenne, garlic paste, olive oil, and basil. Taste for seasoning and add salt or a pinch more cayenne if you like.

For more tasty
bruschetta
toppings, turn
the page.

More bruschetta toppings

The possibilities for topping bruschetta are virtually endless, but two things are key: use high-quality ingredients and keep it simple. The number of servings you'll get out of each topping recipe will depend on how large your bread slices are and how you plan to serve the bruschetta. The yield in each recipe should help you plan.



Warm Herbed Goat Cheese

Yields about 1 cup.

½ pound fresh goat cheese, softened at room temperature
2½ teaspoons finely chopped fresh thyme leaves; plus 1 or 2 sprigs for garnish
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil; more for drizzling
Freshly cracked black pepper

Heat the oven to 350°F. In a small bowl, stir the goat cheese, chopped thyme, and oil until blended. Spread the cheese mixture in an ovenproof ceramic crock or small gratin dish. Drizzle with a bit more olive oil and top with a few grinds of black pepper. Lay the thyme sprigs on top. Bake until the cheese is warm and creamy, about 10 minutes. Serve in the crock, surrounded with grilled bread.

Rustic Green Olive Tapenade

Yields about 2 cups.

1 clove garlic
2 salt-packed anchovies, rinsed and filleted, or 4 oil-packed anchovy fillets
Kosher salt
½ pound green olives, such as Picholine or Lucques, rinsed and pitted
3 tablespoons capers, rinsed well
1 teaspoon finely chopped fresh savory leaves (optional)
3 tablespoons chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
2 hard-cooked eggs, peeled and roughly chopped

With a mortar and pestle, pound the garlic and anchovies to a smooth paste with a pinch of salt.

In a food processor, combine the olives and capers and pulse until the ingredients are roughly chopped. Transfer the mixture to a bowl and stir in the garlic-anchovy paste, herbs, olive oil, and eggs.



Fresh Ricotta with Lemon, Black Pepper & Mint

Yields about 1 cup.

10 ounces fresh whole-milk ricotta cheese (1 1/3 cups)
1 teaspoon finely chopped lemon zest
Kosher salt
1 clove garlic (optional)
Freshly cracked black pepper
Extra-virgin olive oil for drizzling
1 or 2 sprigs mint, leaves picked and finely chopped

Combine the ricotta, lemon zest, and salt in a small bowl. Rub the grilled bread with garlic, if using, and spread the cheese mixture on top. Season with a few twists of pepper, drizzle with the olive oil, and scatter the mint on top.



Anchoiade with Figs & Walnuts

Yields about 3/4 cup.

3 ounces dried figs (about 8), stems removed, flesh coarsely chopped
1 ounce (1/4 cup) shelled walnut halves
8 to 10 oil-packed anchovy fillets
3 cloves garlic
Kosher salt
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
2 teaspoons Cognac
Freshly ground black pepper
Shavings of Parmigiano Reggiano or aged Manchego made with a vegetable peeler

Put the figs, walnuts, anchovies, garlic, and 1/4 teaspoon salt in a food processor. Process until finely chopped. Add the olive oil, Cognac, and a few twists of pepper and process again to make a somewhat coarse paste.

Taste and adjust the seasonings, if necessary. Spread the anchoiade on the grilled bread and top with a few of the cheese shavings.

Tasha Prysi, a former cook at Chez Panisse in Berkeley, California, teaches and writes about cooking. ♦

Tricks for the best bruschetta

Choose rustic country bread or crusty baguettes. Cut slices 1/2 inch thick, and for baguettes, slice on a diagonal to get longer pieces, which are easier to handle on the grill. I brush the bread with olive oil so it browns more evenly on the grill. A quick way to do this is to coat a baking sheet with olive oil and set the slices in it in a single layer. Brush the tops with a little more oil (or flip the slices) and set aside until you're ready to grill.

Build a medium-hot fire. Whether you're using charcoal or gas, the fire should be medium hot. Too hot and the bread will burn; too cool and the bread dries out before it gets nice grill marks. The second side never marks quite as well as the first, so be patient with the first side.

Cut into manageable serving pieces. In most cases, I put on the topping and then cut the bruschetta into manageable serving-size pieces. This is an efficient, time-saving technique, but some loose toppings may fall off. Just top with as much you can, and then cut and add more topping as needed. If you plan to hold the bruschetta for a while, be sure to cut the bread while it's warm or it tends to crack.

A Fresh Approach

For a standout side dish, flavor the beans during cooking and toss them—still warm—with an intense dressing

BY MARTHA HOLMBERG

When I have people over for dinner in the summer, I like to serve an antipasto-style meal—bowls and platters of salad-type dishes built around seasonal produce—and just about every one of my menus includes a bean salad. They're delicious when you make them right, and they're a nice vegetarian option because they feel substantial. But that can be a problem, too: A lot of bean salads that I've tasted have been heavy and bland. To avoid that trap, I keep three key points in mind when I make my salads.

Beans alone can't do the trick. On their own, beans are pretty starchy, so they really benefit from contrasting flavors and texture, like acidity, aromatics, and crunch. I always include another vegetable, like tomatoes, peppers, or corn. I also put a ton of fresh herbs in my salads for complexity and zip.

The vinaigrette has to deliver a powerful punch. Beans have an uncanny way of soaking up flavor, so you need a sauce with a real kick for it to stay bright. I use a lot of salt and pep-

per, and something else strong, like a ground spice or anchovies. (Note to readers who don't like anchovies: Please include the anchovies when you make the white bean recipe. You won't actually taste them, but if they aren't there, the salad won't be as good.)

I also use citrus juice as my acid because I like the way the fruitiness works with the creamy, starchy beans. I double up on the citrus flavor with some grated zest, too, which adds a lovely fragrant note to the salads.

The oil doesn't go in until the end, so the beans drink up more flavor. I first toss the still-warm beans with all the dressing ingredients *except* the oil. When the beans have soaked up all the liquid, I fold in just enough oil to moisten and separate the beans. This gets the flavors blended throughout the dish and not just on the surface of the beans.

You can make these salads ahead of time and keep them in the refrigerator, but be sure to let them come almost to room temperature before serving to let the flavors blossom and the beans become nice and tender again.

Three tricks to make bean salads special



Make an extra-bold dressing that livens up the beans.



Include other ingredients to create more layers of texture.



Add the oil last, after the beans have soaked up the other flavors.

to Bean Salads

White Beans with Garlic, Lemon & Parmesan

Serves four to six.

FOR THE BEANS:

- 1 cup dried white beans, such as Great Northern (to yield about 3 cups cooked) or 1 29-ounce can white beans**
- 1½ teaspoons kosher salt**
- ¼ small onion**
- 1 3-inch sprig fresh rosemary**

FOR THE DRESSING:

- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- 3 cloves garlic, peeled and smashed**
- 1 3-inch sprig fresh rosemary**
- 3 anchovy fillets, rinsed and roughly chopped (optional, but great)**
- ¼ cup finely grated fresh Parmigiano Reggiano (about ½ ounce)**
- ¾ teaspoon kosher salt**
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**
- 1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest**
- ¼ cup fresh lemon juice**

TO ASSEMBLE:

- 1 pint cherry or grape tomatoes, halved**
- ½ cup coarsely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**

Cook the dried beans following the method on p. 46. Transfer them to a large bowl and keep them warm. (If using canned beans, rinse and drain them well.)

Meanwhile, in a small saucepan or skillet, combine the olive oil, garlic, and rosemary. Heat gently until the rosemary starts to sizzle lightly, remove the pan from the heat, and leave to steep for about 20 minutes. Discard the rosemary.

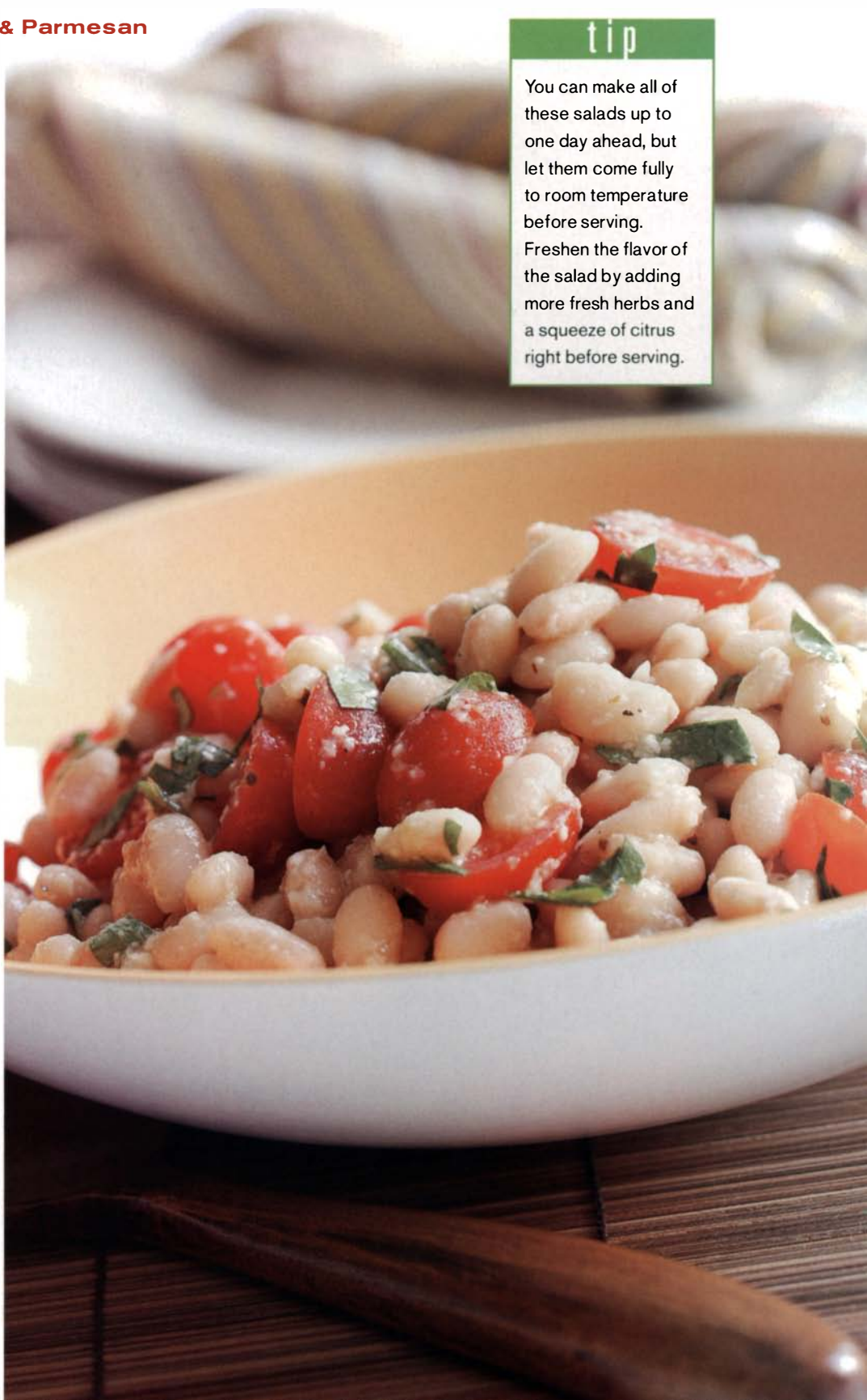
Take the garlic cloves from the oil (reserve the oil) and put them in a food processor, along with the anchovies, grated cheese, salt, pepper, zest, and lemon juice. Process to a fairly smooth mixture. Taste for seasoning; the dressing should be highly seasoned.

Toss the dressing with the warm beans, using a rubber spatula to gently fold so the beans get well coated but not smashed. Let the beans sit for a few minutes and then toss a few more times. It may seem like too much liquid at first, but the beans will gradually absorb it all. Fold in the reserved infused oil, the tomatoes, and the parsley. Taste for seasoning and serve.

tip

You can make all of these salads up to one day ahead, but let them come fully to room temperature before serving.

Freshen the flavor of the salad by adding more fresh herbs and a squeeze of citrus right before serving.



How to cook dried beans for a salad

You can enhance the flavor of any bean dish by cooking the beans with flavorful ingredients at the outset. I use the following method, changing the herb according to the flavors in the final dish. You'll notice that I add salt at the beginning of cooking. Some recipes say that this toughens the skins and slows the cooking, but I've never found either to be true, and early salting allows the flavor to penetrate the beans better.

Use the quantities of beans and flavorings listed in each recipe. Spread the beans on a baking sheet and feel for any stones. Rinse the beans well, put them in a large pot, cover by 3 to 4 inches of water, add the salt, onion, and herbs, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer, cover, and cook until the beans are very tender but not falling apart, 45 minutes to 1½ hours, longer if necessary. Start checking early because beans cook at

different rates; if the water level gets low, add more. When the beans are cooked, let them cool in their liquid for about 15 minutes and then drain.

Quick tip: A pressure cooker can give you a head start on cooking the beans, but don't fully cook them that way because it's hard to control the final texture. Pressure-cook the beans for about 20 minutes, uncover, and then simmer until the texture's perfect.



Black Beans with Mango, Citrus, & Crunchy Jicama

Serves four to six.

The canned chipotle chile is a smoked, dried jalapeño that's canned in a spicy sauce called adobo. Look in the Mexican foods section of your grocery store. You can freeze the extra in a plastic container for up to a year.

FOR THE BEANS:

- 1 cup dried black beans (to yield about 3 cups cooked) or 1 29-ounce can black beans**
- 1½ teaspoons kosher salt**
- ¼ small onion**
- 4 4-inch fresh basil stems**

FOR THE DRESSING:

- 1 teaspoon finely grated orange zest**
- ¼ cup fresh orange juice**
- 1 teaspoon finely grated lime zest**
- ¼ cup fresh lime juice**
- 2 teaspoons granulated sugar**
- 1 teaspoon finely minced canned chipotle chile in adobo sauce, seeded**
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic**
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt**
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**

TO ASSEMBLE:

- 1 ripe mango, cut into ¼-inch dice (to yield about 1½ cups)**

- 1 cup ¼-inch diced jicama (about half of a 2-pound jicama; see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 76)**
- 2 tablespoons minced red onion**
- ¼ cup finely sliced fresh basil**
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**

Cook the dried beans following the method above. Transfer them to a large bowl and keep them warm. (If using canned beans, rinse and drain them well.)

Meanwhile, make the dressing by whisking together the orange zest and juice, the lime zest and juice, the sugar, chipotle, garlic, salt, and pepper until the sugar has dissolved. Toss the dressing with the warm beans, using a rubber spatula to gently fold so the beans get well coated but not smashed. Let the beans sit for a few minutes and then toss a few more times. It may seem like too much liquid at first, but the beans will gradually absorb it all. Fold in the mango, jicama, onion, basil, and olive oil and serve.

Pink Beans with Roasted Red Pepper, Lemon & Fresh Herbs

Serves four to six.

FOR THE BEANS:

1 cup dried pink beans (to yield about 3 cups cooked) or 1 29-ounce can pink beans
1½ teaspoons kosher salt
½ large shallot or ¼ small onion
10 4-inch fresh cilantro stems

FOR THE RED PEPPER & DRESSING:

1 medium red bell pepper
2 tablespoons minced fresh hot chile, such as jalapeño or serrano; more to taste
2 tablespoons minced shallot
2 teaspoons minced garlic
2 teaspoons sweet paprika
1 teaspoon ground cumin
½ teaspoon kosher salt
¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
¼ cup fresh lemon juice
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
½ cup chopped fresh cilantro
¼ cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
2 tablespoons chopped fresh mint

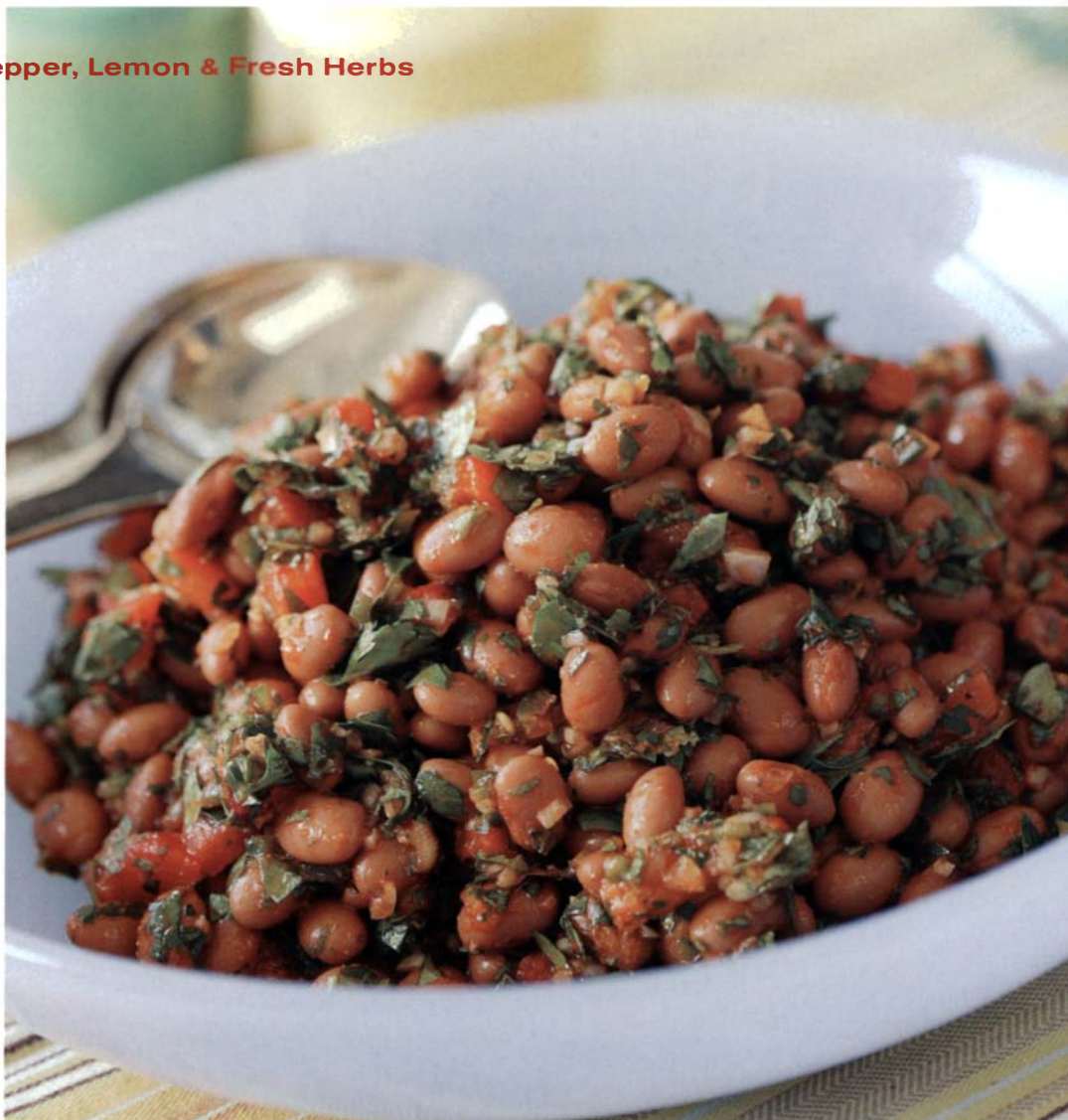
Cook the dried beans following the method at left. Transfer them to a large bowl and keep them warm. (If using canned beans, rinse and drain them well.)

While the beans are cooking, heat the broiler to high. Put the red pepper on a small foil-covered baking sheet and broil until the skin is completely charred, turning to char all sides. When the pepper is blackened, wrap it loosely in the foil and leave it to steam and cool. When cool enough to handle, pull out the core, scrape off all the skin, scrape out the seeds, and cut the flesh into ¼-inch dice. You should have about ½ cup.

Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, whisk together the chile, shallot, garlic, paprika, cumin, salt, pepper, and lemon zest and juice. Let the mixture sit for at least 30 minutes so the shallots soften and the flavors marry.

Toss this dressing with the warm beans, using a rubber spatula to gently fold so the beans get well coated but not smashed. Let the beans sit for a few minutes and then toss a few more times. It may seem like too much liquid at first, but the beans will gradually absorb it all. Fold in the olive oil, roasted pepper, cilantro, parsley, and mint. Taste for seasoning and serve.

Martha Holmberg is Fine Cooking's publisher and editor in chief. ♦



Dried beans are best, but canned are fine in a pinch

I always have a few cans of beans in my pantry; they're an excellent ingredient to have on hand for impromptu meals: quick soups, pasta dishes, burritos, dips. But when it comes to bean salads, dried beans that you've cooked yourself are definitely nicer.

Dried beans give you better texture, and you can add your own flavors, like herbs and onion or garlic. It's a cinch to cook beans, but you do need to plan ahead because they can take a long time, and the exact timing can

vary from bean to bean. For sources of interesting bean varieties, see *Where to Buy It*, p. 80.

Canned beans need thorough rinsing. If you do need to use canned beans for these salads because you're pressed for time, by all means go ahead. (I like Goya; for other brands, see p. 80.) Rinse them thoroughly to get off the slightly gloppy, salty liquid from the can and drain completely. Be gentle when you mix the ingredients, as canned beans tend to be fragile.

Three Takes on Strawberry Shortcake

Start by baking a biscuit
that's good enough to
eat on its own, and then
give it a flavor twist

BY KATHERINE EASTMAN SEELEY





In so many shortcake recipes, the biscuit seems to play a supporting role, there just to soak up the juices from the berries and as a place to plop the cream. But I'm a pastry chef, and in my shortcake recipes, the biscuit is the star. In fact, I often make a couple of the following recipes to serve on their own as scones.

Part of the reason my biscuits are so good is good technique, which I'll share in a second, but it's also because I've jazzed up the traditional recipe with new flavors. In addition to the buttery classic, I make a lemon-poppysseed biscuit—great with mixed berries—and a deep, dark chocolate biscuit. Cocoa and semisweet chocolate give this version an intense flavor close to that of a brownie, but with a light, flaky texture.

Tips for tender biscuits, juicy berries, and billowy cream

I count on three things to make great biscuits. The first is sifting the flour before mixing. This lightens the dry ingredients and ultimately gives the biscuit a fine, delicate texture. I also use cream in the biscuit to add richness to both their flavor and texture. The fat in the cream (and in the butter) has a shortening effect, which inhibits gluten from developing and keeps the dough tender. And as with most pastry, I work the dough as little as possible to keep it from becoming tough. This means kneading the dough until it's just combined but still slightly shaggy.

Whether you get your strawberries from the grocery store, the farmers' market, or the local pick-your-own place, you'll need to toss them in sugar before you fill your shortcakes. The sugar sweetens them, of course, but—more important—it gets the berries' juices flowing and softens their texture so that they'll settle nicely into the biscuit and make the whole dish feel well integrated.

To whip the cream, I use a two-step process to get the soft texture I want. First I whip it with an electric mixer until the marks of the beaters are visible. Then I finish whipping by hand with a whisk, which gives me more control, decreasing the chance of overwhipping. If you do overwhip your cream, add just a little more cream and whisk until soft.

Far left, Traditional Strawberry Shortcakes; top, Lemon-Poppysseed Shortcakes with Summer Berries; bottom, Chocolate Strawberry Shortcakes.

4 steps to tender biscuits



1. *Cut the butter into the flour mixture with a pastry cutter or a fork until the largest pieces of butter are the size of peas. The butter will melt and create steam when baked, making a flaky biscuit.*

2. *Make a well and pour in the cream. Mix just until the ingredients start to come together. If your dough is too dry to combine, add more cream, one tablespoon at a time.*



3. *Work the dough gently until just combined. Knead gently to bring the dough together into a loose ball.*

4. *Gently pat the dough into a square about 1 inch thick and refrigerate for 20 minutes. This gives the flour a chance to relax and also helps the biscuits hold their shape when baked.*



Traditional Strawberry Shortcakes

Serves nine.

FOR THE BISCUITS:
13½ ounces (about 3 cups)
all-purpose flour
3 tablespoons granulated sugar; plus about 3 tablespoons for sprinkling
1½ tablespoons baking powder
¾ teaspoon table salt
6 ounces (12 tablespoons)
cold unsalted butter, cut into small pieces
1½ cups heavy cream; plus about 3 tablespoons for brushing
1½ teaspoons pure vanilla extract

FOR THE STRAWBERRIES:
5 cups ⅛-inch-thick strawberry slices (from about 3 pints)
1 to 3 tablespoons granulated sugar, depending on the sweetness of the berries

FOR THE WHIPPED CREAM:
1½ cups heavy cream
2 tablespoons granulated sugar
¾ teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Make the biscuits: Line a heavy baking sheet with parchment. Sift the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt into a large bowl. Toss with a fork to combine. Cut the butter into the flour mixture with a pastry cutter or a fork until the largest pieces of butter are the size of peas. Combine the cream and vanilla in a liquid measure. Make a well in the center of the flour and pour the cream mixture into the well. Mix with a fork until the dough is evenly moistened and just combined; it should look shaggy and still feel a little dry. Gently knead by hand five or six times to pick up any dry ingredients remaining in the bottom of the bowl and to create a loose ball.

Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured work surface



and pat it into an 8-inch square, ¾ to 1 inch thick. Transfer the dough to the parchment-lined baking sheet, cover with plastic wrap, and chill for 20 minutes. Meanwhile, heat the oven to 425°F. Remove the dough from the refrigerator and trim about ¼ inch from each side to create a neat, sharp edge (a bench knife or a pastry scraper works well, or use a large chef's knife, being sure to cut straight down). Cut the dough into 9 even squares (about 2½ inches square) and spread them about 2 inches apart on the baking sheet. With a pastry brush or the back of a spoon, brush each biscuit with a thin layer of cream and sprinkle generously with sugar. Bake until the biscuits are medium golden brown on top and the bottoms are golden brown, 18 to 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, prepare the strawberries: See the sidebar at far right.

Whip the cream: See the sidebar at far right.

Assemble the shortcakes: See the sidebar at far right. Put a few strawberries on the top half of the biscuit before the final dollop of whipped cream and serve.

Lemon-Poppyseed Shortcakes with Summer Berries

Serves nine.

FOR THE LEMON-POPPYSEED BISCUITS:

13½ ounces (about 3 cups)
all-purpose flour
¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons
granulated sugar; plus
about 3 tablespoons for
sprinkling
1½ tablespoons baking
powder
¾ teaspoon table salt
¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons
finely grated, lightly packed
lemon zest; more for garnish
2 tablespoons poppyseeds
6 ounces (¾ cup) cold unsalted
butter, cut into small pieces
1¼ cups heavy cream; plus
about 3 tablespoons for
brushing
¼ cup fresh lemon juice

FOR THE BERRIES:

2 cups ⅛-inch-thick strawberry
slices (from about 1½ pints)
1 cup blueberries
1 cup raspberries
1 cup blackberries
1 to 3 tablespoons granulated
sugar, depending on the
sweetness of the berries

FOR THE LEMON WHIPPED CREAM:

1½ cups heavy cream
2 tablespoons granulated sugar
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

Make the biscuits: Line a heavy baking sheet with parchment. Sift the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt into a large bowl. Add the lemon zest and poppyseeds and toss with a fork to combine. Cut the butter into the flour mixture with a pastry cutter or a fork until the largest pieces of butter are the size of peas. Combine the cream and lemon juice in a liquid measure. Make a well in the center of the flour mixture and pour the cream mixture into the well. Mix with a fork until the dough is evenly moistened and just combined; it should look shaggy and still feel a little dry. Gently knead by hand five or



six times to pick up any dry ingredients remaining in the bottom of the bowl and to create a loose ball.

Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured work surface and pat it into an 8-inch square, ¾ to 1 inch thick. Transfer the dough to the parchment-lined baking sheet, cover with plastic wrap, and chill for 20 minutes. Meanwhile, heat the oven to 425°F. Remove the dough from the refrigerator and trim about ¼ inch from each side to create a neat, sharp edge (a bench knife or a pastry scraper works well, or use a large chef's knife, being sure to cut straight down). Cut the dough into 9 even squares (about 2½ inches square) and spread them about 2 inches apart on the baking sheet. With a pastry brush or the back of a spoon, brush each biscuit with a thin layer of cream and sprinkle generously with sugar. Bake until the biscuits are medium golden brown on top and the bottoms are golden brown, 18 to 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, prepare the berries: See the sidebar at right.

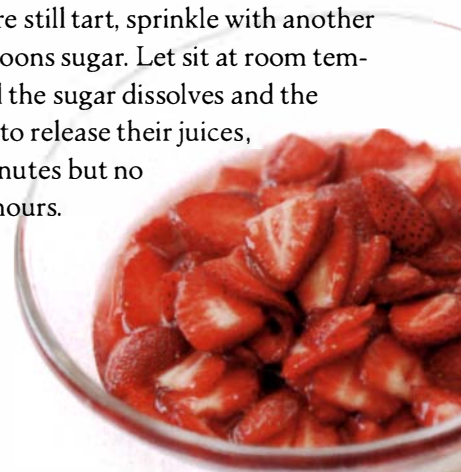
Whip the cream: See the sidebar at right, substituting the lemon juice for the vanilla.

Assemble the shortcakes: See the sidebar at right. Garnish with lemon zest and serve.

While the biscuits are baking...

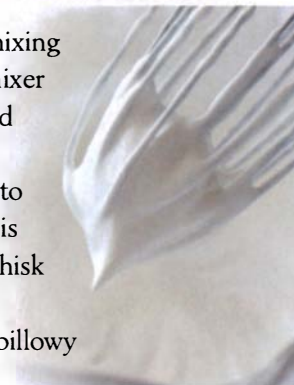
Prepare the berries

Toss the berries with 1 tablespoon sugar and taste. If they're still tart, sprinkle with another 1 to 2 tablespoons sugar. Let sit at room temperature until the sugar dissolves and the berries begin to release their juices, at least 30 minutes but no more than 2 hours.



Whip the cream

Pour the cream into a cold mixing bowl and beat with a hand mixer until it begins to thicken. Add the sugar and vanilla extract and, using a whisk, continue to beat by hand until the cream is softly whipped or until the whisk leaves distinct marks in the cream; it should be soft and billowy but still hold its shape.



Assemble the shortcakes

While the biscuits are still warm, split them in half horizontally with a serrated knife. For each serving, set the bottom half of a biscuit on a plate. Scoop about ½ cup of the berries and their juices over the biscuit. Add a generous dollop of whipped cream and cover with the top half of the biscuit. Top with a small dollop of cream and any garnish the recipe calls for.

Chocolate Strawberry Shortcakes

Serves nine.

FOR THE CHOCOLATE BISCUITS:

10 ounces (about 2¼ cups)
all-purpose flour
1½ ounces (about ¼ cup plus 3 tablespoons) Dutch-processed cocoa powder, such as Droste
¼ cup granulated sugar; plus about 3 tablespoons for sprinkling
1½ tablespoons baking powder
¾ teaspoon table salt
4½ ounces (9 tablespoons) cold unsalted butter, cut into small pieces
6½ ounces semisweet chocolate, grated or finely chopped (the food processor works well); more for garnish
1¼ cups heavy cream; plus about 3 tablespoons for brushing
1½ teaspoons pure vanilla extract

FOR THE STRAWBERRIES:

5 cups ⅛-inch-thick strawberry slices (from about 3 pints)
1 to 3 tablespoons granulated sugar, depending on the sweetness of the berries

FOR THE WHIPPED CREAM:

1½ cups heavy cream
2 tablespoons granulated sugar
¾ teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Make the biscuits: Line a heavy baking sheet with parchment. Sift the flour, cocoa powder, sugar, baking powder, and salt into a large bowl. Toss with a fork to combine. Cut the butter into the dry ingredients with a pastry cutter or a fork until the largest pieces of butter are the size of peas. Add the grated chocolate and toss to combine. Combine the cream and vanilla in a liquid measure. Make a well in the center of the flour mixture and pour the cream into the well. Mix with a fork until the dough is evenly moistened and just combined; it should look shaggy and still feel a little dry. Gently knead by hand five or six times to pick up any dry ingredients remaining in the bottom of the bowl and to create a loose ball.

Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured work surface and pat it into an 8-inch square, ¾ to 1 inch thick. Transfer the dough to the parchment-lined baking sheet,



cover with plastic wrap, and chill for 20 minutes. Meanwhile, heat the oven to 425°F. Remove the dough from the refrigerator and trim about ¼ inch from each side to create a neat, sharp edge (a bench knife or a pastry scraper works well, or use a large chef's knife, being sure to cut straight down). Cut the dough into 9 even squares (about 2½ inches square) and spread them about 2 inches apart on the baking sheet. With a pastry brush or the back of a spoon, brush each biscuit with a thin layer of cream and sprinkle generously with sugar. Bake until the biscuits look a little dry and are mostly firm to the touch (they should spring back slightly when gently pressed), 18 to 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, prepare the strawberries: See the sidebar on p. 51.

Whip the cream: See the sidebar on p. 51.

Assemble the shortcakes: See the sidebar on p. 51. Garnish with some grated chocolate and a berry or two and serve.

Katherine Eastman Seeley is a pastry chef and food writer. ♦

Make-ahead tips

FOR THE BISCUITS: I prefer to serve the biscuits warm—not hot—from the oven, but you can make them several hours in advance. (You can even bake the biscuits a day ahead, or freeze them for up to three months, although their texture will suffer slightly.) Just before serving, reheat the prepared biscuits in a 200°F oven until warmed through.

FOR THE BERRIES: You can slice the berries hours ahead of time and refrigerate them. Half an hour before assembling the shortcakes, toss the berries with the sugar and let them sit at room temperature.

FOR THE WHIPPED CREAM: Under-whip your cream and refrigerate it, covered, until ready to serve. Then use a whisk to finish whipping.

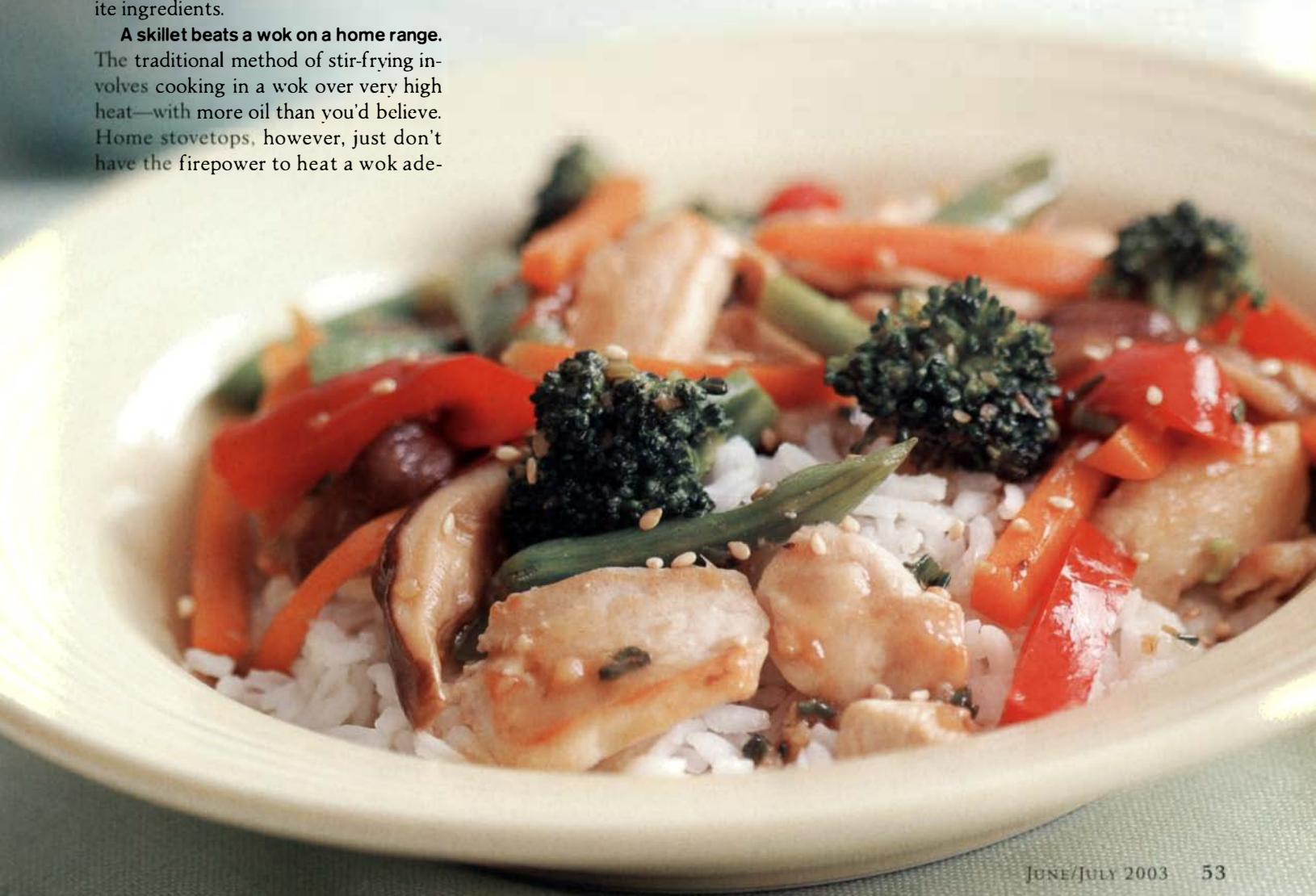
Get Ready to Stir-Fry

A stir-fry has all the features of an ideal weeknight meal—it's quick, nutritious, and delicious. But stir-frying on a home stove isn't the same as stir-frying over the super-high temperatures that a Chinese chef uses. Too often, a home-cooked stir-fry falls prey to unevenly cooked vegetables, dry meat, scorched garlic, or a watery sauce. My method reorganizes the classic stir-frying method so that you're able to stay in control throughout the process and get perfect results every time. The basic method is simple enough to learn by heart, yet it's flexible enough that you can get creative with your favorite ingredients.

A skillet beats a wok on a home range. The traditional method of stir-frying involves cooking in a wok over very high heat—with more oil than you'd believe. Home stovetops, however, just don't have the firepower to heat a wok ade-

Once you learn the setup and cooking order, you can create quick and delicious dishes on the spur of the moment

BY ROBERT DANHI



quately and evenly. Your best bet is a heavy 12-inch skillet. It conducts heat well, and the pan's shallow sides allow extra moisture to evaporate, keeping the vegetables crisp and the meat tender. And you'll use less oil, too.

To keep things sizzling, don't overcrowd the pan. The trick is to stir-fry in batches—first the meat, chicken, or seafood and then the vegetables and the aromatics.

Stir-fry the chicken, meat, or seafood until it doesn't look raw anymore. The center may still be undercooked, but don't worry: It will continue to cook from carry-over heat as it rests, and then you'll return it to the pan after stir-frying the vegetables.

Different vegetables cook at different rates (think carrot versus bell pepper), so you'll often see recipes that call for cooking each vegetable separately. Since I like to use a lot of different vegetables in my stir-fries, I find this tedious. It defeats the whole quick-cooking concept. So I've designed my stir-fry method so that each vegetable is cut to a specific size according to its density (i.e., the denser the vegetable, the smaller the cut). This way, the vegetables can (Continued on p. 56)

1 Slice and season your choice of meat, chicken, or shrimp

For three to four people, use one pound of one of the following. Season with ¼ teaspoon kosher salt and a dash of ground white pepper; toss to combine before stir-frying.

WHICH CUT TO USE

HOW TO PREPARE

Beef

Rib-eye or sirloin for the best balance of flavor and tenderness.
New York strip for adequate tenderness and lots of flavor.
Flank steak for lean yet flavorful beef that's sufficiently tender.

Trim any fat or sinew. Cut across the grain (see p. 72) into ¼ inch slices and then into pieces 2 inches long and 1 inch wide.

Pork

Boneless loin chops for the best balance of flavor and tenderness.
Tenderloin for more tender texture but less flavor.

Trim any fat or sinew. Cut across the grain (see p. 72) into ¼ inch slices and then into pieces 2 inches long and 1 inch wide.

Chicken

Boneless, skinless breasts for tenderness.
Boneless, skinless thighs for more flavor and adequate tenderness.

Trim any fat or sinew. Cut crosswise into two or three even pieces. Turn each piece and cut into ¼-inch strips across the grain (see p. 72).

Shrimp

"Small" (26/30 count) for quick cooking, although any size will do (larger 16/20 count should be split in half lengthwise).

Peel and devein, rinse under cold running water, and pat dry with paper towels.



First you'll need to select and prepare all your ingredients

2 Choose and prepare a mix of vegetables

Choose your vegetables for a nice balance of color, flavor, and texture, and then prepare each as directed below for even cooking. You'll need about 1 pound total (about 4 cups).

WHICH VEGETABLES TO USE

HOW TO PREPARE

Carrots

For a bright color and crisp crunch.

Peel and slice into ¼-inch coins cut on the diagonal or into 2x¼-inch sticks.

Broccoli

For the florets' ability to trap pockets of the sauce.

Cut into ¾-inch florets.

Bell peppers

For color (use yellow, red, or green), crunch, and sweetness.

Core and cut into 2x½-inch strips.

Shiitake mushrooms

For earthy flavor and delicate chewiness.

Remove the stems and cut the caps into ½-inch strips.

Sugar snap peas

For sweet crunch and unique shape.

Snap off the stem and pull back on the attached string to remove it.

Asparagus

For brilliant color, rich, earthy flavor, and unique shape.

Snap off and discard woody ends and cut spears at an angle into 1-inch lengths (slice thick stalks in half lengthwise first).

Bok Choy

For an authentic Asian touch and fresh flavor.

Cut off the root end; separate and stack the stalks. Cut the white stalks on the bias into 1-inch pieces; cut the leaves into 2-inch pieces. Wash and drain after cutting.

Red Onions

For the purple color and sweet snap of flavor.

Cut in half and then into ½-inch slices (you can substitute yellow or white onions, or 1-inch scallion pieces).

3 Whisk up one of these flavorful sauces

All these recipes use the same mixing method: In a measuring cup, combine the cornstarch with the second ingredient in the list, whisking to blend. Then whisk in the remaining ingredients.

Cantonese Orange Sauce

Yields about ½ cup.

Give this sauce a twist by adding some thin strips of lemon or lime zest.

1½ teaspoons cornstarch
2 teaspoons soy sauce
¼ cup homemade or low-salt canned chicken broth
2 tablespoons thawed frozen orange juice concentrate
2 tablespoons dry sherry
1½ teaspoons oyster sauce
1 teaspoon granulated sugar
½ teaspoon minced fresh ginger

Sesame-Soy Sauce

Yields about ½ cup.

Toast the sesame seeds in a small, dry skillet over medium heat, tossing until golden and fragrant. Immediately transfer to a small bowl to stop the cooking.

1½ teaspoons cornstarch
2 teaspoons rice vinegar
¼ cup homemade or low-salt canned chicken broth
2 tablespoons soy sauce
2 teaspoons granulated sugar
1 tablespoon sliced scallions (white and green parts)
2 teaspoons sesame seeds, toasted
2 teaspoons toasted sesame oil
½ teaspoon minced garlic

Spicy Sichuan Sauce

Yields about ⅔ cup.

Some supermarkets carry Asian chile paste. For a better selection, try an Asian grocery store, or see p. 80.

1½ teaspoons cornstarch
1½ teaspoons soy sauce
¼ cup homemade or low-salt canned chicken broth
2 tablespoons dry sherry
1 tablespoon Asian chile paste
1 tablespoon sliced scallions (white and green parts)
1 tablespoon honey
1 tablespoon hoisin sauce
½ teaspoon minced fresh ginger
½ teaspoon minced garlic

Chinese Black Bean Sauce

Yields about ⅓ cup.

Garnish your stir-fry with fresh cilantro leaves when using this sauce. Look for Chinese black bean and garlic sauce in your supermarket, or see p. 80 for sources.

1½ teaspoons cornstarch
1½ teaspoons dry sherry
½ cup homemade or low-salt chicken broth
1½ tablespoons Chinese black bean and garlic sauce
1 tablespoon granulated sugar
1 teaspoon Asian chile paste
½ teaspoon minced fresh ginger

4 Prepare an aromatic trio

I use these three ingredients in every stir-fry. Combine them in one bowl so they're easy to add to the pan at the right point.

Aromatic Base

2 tablespoons very thinly sliced scallion (white and green parts)
2 teaspoons minced fresh ginger
2 teaspoons minced garlic

cook at the same rate in one easy batch (see the chart on p. 55).

Just a bit of water prevents burning. The ideal stir-fried vegetable is crisp-tender, and the best way to tell if you've reached this stage is to sample a piece straight from the pan. (Choose one of the densest vegetables, like a carrot.) Depending on your stove, this can take anywhere from one to four minutes. Since I use much less oil than in a traditional stir-fry, sometimes my pan dries out and the vegetables begin to burn before they're crisp-tender. If I see this happening, I add water, about a tablespoon at a time, to the pan to keep the process going without adding more oil.

Waiting to add the aromatic trio—garlic, ginger, and scallion—until after the vegetables have cooked for a minute is another trick to prevent scorching. With plenty of vegetables in the pan to temper the heat, the flavors of the garlic, ginger, and scallion can bloom without the chance of burning.

Once your vegetables are cooked and the meat is back in the pan, you just have to stir in the sauce. Four of my favorite sauce recipes are on p. 55, but feel free to create your own.

Basic Stir-Fry Formula

Serves three to four.

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 pound meat, chicken, or seafood
- 1 pound vegetables
- 1 recipe aromatic base
- 1 recipe sauce
- Small bowl of water



Ready? Start stir-frying. In 7 quick steps, you'll have dinner.



1 Heat a 12-inch skillet or a stir-fry pan over high heat for 2 minutes. Add 1 tablespoon vegetable oil, swirl to coat the pan evenly, and heat until the oil just barely begins to smoke, about 30 seconds—only a light haze is necessary.



2 Add the seasoned shrimp, meat, or chicken. Let it sear for about 15 seconds and then begin to stir occasionally (every 10 seconds or so) until its raw appearance is gone but the center is slightly undercooked—1 to 2 minutes. Transfer to a bowl.



3 Add another 1 tablespoon oil to the pan and swirl to coat evenly. Add the vegetables and 1 tablespoon water and cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute.



Some of my favorite combinations

Try a few of my recommendations to get started, and then create your own versions.

- ❖ Stir-Fried Beef, Red Peppers, Onions & Shiitake Mushrooms with Spicy Sichuan Sauce
- ❖ Stir-Fried Pork, Shiitake Mushrooms, Asparagus, Red Onions, Carrots & Bok Choy with Chinese Black Bean Sauce
- ❖ Stir-Fried Shrimp with Peppers, Asparagus, Sugar Snap Peas, Carrots & Bok Choy with Cantonese Orange Sauce
- ❖ Stir-Fried Chicken with Shiitake Mushrooms, Broccoli, Carrots & Sugar Snap Peas with Sesame-Soy Sauce

Robert Danhi is the executive chef of Two Chefs on a Roll in Los Angeles. ♦



4 Add the mixture of aromatics and cook, stirring constantly, until the vegetables are crisp-tender, 1 to 4 minutes.



5 If the bottom of the pan looks like it's starting to burn, add more water, 1 tablespoon at a time.



6 Stir the shrimp, chicken, or meat back into the pan and cook for another 30 seconds to reheat and to blend the flavors.



7 Whisk the sauce to recombine it. Pour the sauce into the stir-fry, stirring well to coat evenly, and cook until it thickens, 15 to 20 seconds. Transfer the stir-fry to a bowl and serve immediately with rice.



Peppery Arugula

adds punch to
salads & more

BY ALI EDWARDS

*Mature arugula
leaves*

For salads,
look for the
youngest and
mildest leaves.
More mature
arugula is
spicier, so it's
perfect for
cooking.



*Young arugula
leaves*

Arugula's deliciously pungent flavor may come as a surprise if you've never tasted it—it packs a lot more zip than most other greens. And if you are familiar with this peppery, nutty leaf, it's likely you know how much depth and character it brings to any salad, whether alone or mixed with other greens.

But the great thing about arugula (also known as rucola, rocket, or roquette) is that while it makes a delicious garden salad, arugula is also excellent in cooked dishes such as pastas and sautés, and as a bed for grilled, seared, or roasted seafood and meats.

Arugula's flavor ranges from subtle to intense

As both an organic produce grower and a caterer, I've had many chances to eat and cook with arugula. While the leaf always maintains its familiar flavor, the intensity changes depending upon the growing conditions and the age of the plant. Arugula that's grown in hotter temperatures or that comes from more mature plants can be more on the peppery side, which is great for cooking. Young plants, mild climates, and lots of water will result in mild, tender leaves that are perfect for salad.

At the market, choose arugula based on what you plan to do with it.

For salads in which arugula is the main green, look for the youngest and mildest leaves available; they won't have the pronounced lobes of older arugula and will be a lighter shade of green. Sometimes you'll find them packaged as baby arugula. When you get these leaves home, drop them in a bowl of cool water to both rehydrate and wash them. Spin them dry and store them in a plastic bag in the fridge. Be sure the leaves are as dry as possible and don't overstuff the bag. A good trick for keeping young greens fresh is to fill the bag no more than half full, then fill the rest of the bag with air (like a balloon) and tie it off, keeping the air inside with the greens.

More mature arugula will be a darker shade of green and have lobed leaves. The darker the green, the stronger the flavor. Look for a smooth and even coloring. Steer clear of any leaves that look leathery or show signs of yellowing.

More mature arugula provides a great accent mixed with milder greens, and it's the best kind to use for Pasta with Peas, Arugula & Prosciutto (at right), Seared Beef Tenderloin with Arugula & Mushrooms (p. 60), and Arugula with Shrimp & Potatoes (p. 61). While you needn't wash mature leaves right away (they're a bit harder than young ones), you can treat them to the same storage process as younger leaves. Be sure to remove larger, tougher stems before cooking.

Arugula should be thoroughly washed in a few changes of water, especially if the leaves are more mature. Arugula grows in sandy soil and tends to trap a fair bit of it. Taste a leaf before you continue with the recipe to be sure you've gotten rid of all the grit, which would mar that sassy flavor.



Pasta with Peas, Arugula & Prosciutto

Serves four to six as a main course.

Use a sharp vegetable peeler for the Parmigiano shavings.

1 pound dried pasta, such as orecchiette or penne
1 pound arugula (about 4 small bunches)
6 tablespoons unsalted butter
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 pound fresh English peas, shelled (pods discarded or saved for vegetable stock) or 1 cup frozen peas, thawed
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
3 tablespoons olive oil
10 thin slices prosciutto, diced (6 to 7 ounces)
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
¼ cup freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano; plus ¼ cup shavings for garnish
2 tablespoons chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

Put a pot of water on to boil. Salt it well and boil the pasta following the package directions.

Meanwhile, trim, wash, and thoroughly dry the arugula; chop it coarsely and set aside. In a large saucepan over medium

heat, melt 4 tablespoons of the butter.

Add the garlic and sauté until barely golden, about 2 minutes. Add the peas and sauté until tender-crisp, another 3 to 4 minutes if using fresh or 1 minute if using thawed frozen. Season lightly with salt and pepper. With a slotted spoon, remove the peas and garlic from the pan and set aside. Leave as much liquid in the pan as possible and add the olive oil to the pan. Add the prosciutto and cook until very lightly browned, about 5 minutes. Add the arugula in batches, stirring and adding handfuls as it wilts. Add the lemon juice. Cook for only a few minutes, just until all the greens have wilted.

When the pasta is done, reserve 1 cup of the cooking water and drain the pasta. In a large bowl, toss the pasta with the peas, prosciutto, arugula, and grated Parmigiano, along with ½ cup of the reserved cooking water. Season with more ground pepper; toss. Taste and adjust the seasonings if needed. If the pasta seems dry, toss with more of the reserved cooking water. To serve, garnish each portion with the parsley and the Parmigiano shavings.

Arugula Salad with Nectarines & Fresh Raspberry Vinaigrette

Serves six.

Substituting peaches for the nectarines also makes a delicious salad. You may have some leftover dressing, but it's delicious on other tossed green salads.

1 small shallot, minced
3 tablespoons raspberry vinegar
½ teaspoon grated orange zest
1 tablespoon fresh orange juice
Kosher salt
2 ripe nectarines
6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
Freshly ground black pepper to taste
⅔ cup fresh raspberries
½ pound baby arugula or 1 pound arugula (about 4 small bunches), stems trimmed, thoroughly washed, dried, and torn into bite-size pieces (to yield about 8 cups, loosely packed)

Combine the minced shallot with the raspberry vinegar, the orange zest, half the orange juice, and a pinch of salt. Set aside. Halve the nectarines, remove the pits, and then slice the halves into ¼-inch wedges; toss them with the remaining orange juice and set aside. Gradually whisk the olive oil into the shallot and vinegar mixture and add a few grinds of black pepper. In a small bowl, very lightly mash the raspberries, allowing them to keep some of their original shape and then stir them gently into the vinaigrette. Just before serving, put the arugula in a large bowl and toss with half the dressing to coat the leaves lightly. Toss the nectarines in 1 tablespoon of the vinaigrette. Arrange the arugula on a platter or individual dishes, topping the greens with the nectarine slices. Drizzle with a bit more dressing and serve.



Seared Beef Tenderloin with Arugula & Mushrooms

Serves two.

If you can't get medallions, buy filet mignon (tenderloin steaks) and cut them in half to a ½-inch thickness yourself.

3 oil-packed sun-dried tomato halves, drained and minced
¼ cup unsalted butter, well softened
¼ teaspoon sherry vinegar
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
4 beef tenderloin medallions, ½ inch thick (¾ pound total)
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 shallots, minced
¼ pound cremini mushrooms, stems trimmed and discarded; caps wiped clean and sliced about ¼ inch thick

2 small bunches (½ pound) arugula, trimmed, washed, and dried (or 10 ounces packaged baby arugula)

Mix the minced sun-dried tomatoes with 2 tablespoons of the butter and the vinegar. Season with a pinch or two of salt, wrap in plastic, and mold into a 2-inch-long cylinder. Put in the freezer to firm.

Season the beef well on both sides with salt and pepper. In a large skillet over medium-high heat, heat the olive oil until quite hot. Sear the beef medallions until well browned on both sides and



cooked to rare, about 2 minutes per side (or longer if you like your steak cooked more). Transfer to a plate and tent with foil to keep warm. Add the remaining 2 tablespoons of butter to the pan. When it's foaming, add the shallots, cook for 30 seconds, and add the mushrooms and a good pinch of salt. Sauté until the

mushrooms are well browned, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the arugula to the pan and toss with the mushrooms, cooking just until the leaves have wilted. Arrange the sautéed vegetables on dinner plates, top with the beef, and serve with a slice or two of the chilled butter on the beef.



Warm Arugula, Shrimp & Potato Salad

Serves two.

Roasting the shrimp in their shells keeps them moist and juicy.

12 jumbo shrimp (¾ pound), unpeeled
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
½ pound small red-skinned potatoes (or other low-starch variety), scrubbed and quartered (if large, cut into 1-inch chunks)
½ teaspoon minced fresh rosemary
1 small clove garlic
¼ teaspoon grated lemon zest
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice; more to taste
1 tablespoon chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
20 kalamata olives, pitted and halved (¾ cup)
2 small bunches arugula (6 to 7 ounces), trimmed, washed, dried, and torn into bite-size pieces (or ¼ pound baby arugula, to yield 3½ to 4 cups loosely packed)

Heat the oven to 425°F. In a medium bowl, toss the shrimp with ½ tablespoon of the oil, and season with salt and pepper. Pour onto one side of a large rimmed baking sheet and arrange in a single layer. In the same bowl, toss the potatoes with another ½ tablespoon olive oil, ¼ teaspoon of the minced rosemary, and more salt and pepper. Pour onto the other side of the baking sheet and arrange in a single layer. Roast until the shrimp are cooked through and opaque, 7 to 8 minutes. Remove the shrimp from the oven and set aside to cool. Return the potatoes to the oven and continue to roast until tender and slightly crisp around the edges, about 15 minutes longer. When the shrimp are cool enough to handle, peel them and set aside.

Meanwhile, chop the garlic, add two good pinches salt, and mince to a coarse paste. In a small bowl, combine the minced garlic, lemon zest and juice, the remaining ¼ teaspoon rosemary, a pinch more salt, and a few grinds of pepper. Whisk in the remaining 3 tablespoons olive oil. Taste and add more lemon juice if needed.

When the potatoes are done, put them in a medium bowl, along with the shrimp, parsley, and olives. Add half the dressing; toss to coat. In another bowl, toss the arugula with the remaining dressing. Arrange the dressed arugula on dinner plates, top with the shrimp and potatoes, and serve.

Jazz up sandwiches with arugula

In place of the expected lettuce leaves, try arugula in sandwiches like these:

- ❖ On sourdough bread brushed with olive oil, try ricotta salata, sun-dried tomatoes, and a few arugula leaves. Season with freshly ground black pepper.
- ❖ On a French baguette halved lengthwise and crosswise and brushed with olive oil, lay a slice of fresh mozzarella, paper-thin prosciutto, and a few arugula leaves. Season with freshly ground black pepper.
- ❖ On slices of whole-wheat walnut bread or German-style pumpernickel, try a snack-style sandwich of blue cheese, a drizzle of honey or a few slices of dried figs, and a few arugula leaves. Season with freshly ground black pepper.
- ❖ On focaccia, layer a few slices of roast beef, your favorite sliced heirloom or hybrid tomatoes, a dab of grainy mustard, and a few arugula leaves.
- ❖ On sourdough bread smeared with tapenade, add a few slices of goat cheese and some arugula leaves.

Ali Edwards is one of the founding farmers of Dirty Girl Produce and runs The Green Table, an organic catering company, both in Santa Cruz, California. ♦

Grilled Chicken for Today & Tomorrow

BY SU-MEI YU

Throughout Thailand, makeshift food stalls dot the roadside, selling all kinds of delicious food hot off portable grills. It's there that I tasted the most fabulous grilled chicken I've ever had. I used to buy several—one to devour immediately in the car, and the rest to use throughout the week.

After years of haunting those roadside stands, I realized that the chicken I craved was a simple Thai marinade of garlic, cilantro, oil, and a few basic spices. Now I make my favorite chicken at home—and I'm sure to have enough tasty leftovers to use throughout the week for fried rice, chicken salad, and noodles.

Butterfly for even cooking; marinate for flavor.

To cook the chicken over a gas or charcoal grill, I butterfly it before marinating. Butterflying creates more surface area to char and give the chicken that great smoky flavor, and it helps cook it more evenly, too. Marinating for eight hours results in the most intense flavor, but I've marinated for as little as one hour with good results.

Grill tonight for extra chicken tomorrow. The recipes on pp. 64-65—Curried Fried Rice, Chicken-Apple Salad, and Cool Rice Noodles—are delicious and easy ways to use leftover chicken. The recipes call for anywhere from ¼ cup to 2 cups of shredded chicken, so if you're serving your Grilled Thai Chicken to two people the first night, you'll have enough chicken left over to make one or two of these dishes in the next few days. But if you're feeding four the first night, consider grilling two chickens so you're sure to have leftovers. The marinade is easily doubled. I've also included a recipe for an easy sweet and sour sauce that's great to serve with the grilled chicken and also makes a flavorful ingredient for the other recipes.

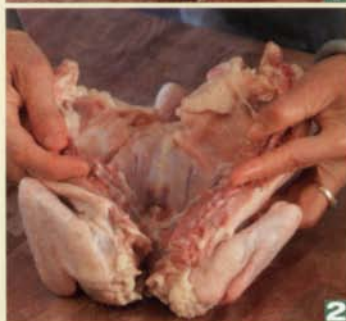
Delicious destinations for leftover Grilled Thai Chicken (from the top): Curried Fried Rice; Cool Rice Noodles; Chicken-Apple Salad.





Butterfly the chicken

1 Position the chicken breast side down. With poultry shears or a sharp chef's knife, cut along one side of the backbone and then down the other. Discard the backbone.



2 Splay the chicken apart and press down to flatten.



3 Turn the chicken over and flatten it again. You'll need to break the sternum and some ribs.

Marinate it with intense flavor

4 Gently separate the breast and thigh skin from the flesh and slip a bit of the marinade under the skin. Then put the chicken and the rest of the marinade in a large zip-top bag, seal the bag, and massage it to distribute the marinade all over the chicken.



Grilled Thai Chicken

Serves four; yields 3½ to 4 cups shredded meat.

Serve the chicken with jasmine rice (see p. 74) and the Sweet & Sour Sauce at right. Cook extra rice if you plan to make fried rice tomorrow.

FOR THE MARINADE:

15 cloves garlic
¼ teaspoon kosher salt
1 teaspoon coriander seeds, toasted and ground
1 tablespoon white peppercorns, toasted and ground
¾ cup minced cilantro stems (from about 1 large bunch)
¼ cup soy sauce
2 tablespoons vegetable oil

FOR THE CHICKEN:

1 chicken, 3½ to 4 pounds, preferably kosher, fat trimmed and discarded, chicken rinsed and thoroughly patted dry
Vegetable or olive oil spray

Make the marinade: In a food processor, mince the garlic with the salt. Add the ground coriander seeds, ground peppercorns,

cilantro stems, soy sauce, and oil; purée until completely blended, 1 to 2 minutes. You'll have about 1 cup marinade. Transfer to a bowl, cover, and set aside (refrigerate it if you're working ahead).

Prepare the chicken: Butterfly the chicken following the photos above. Rinse the chicken and dry it with paper towels. Marinate the chicken as described in step 4 above, refrigerated, for at least 1 hour and up to 8 hours. Half an hour or so before grilling, take the chicken out of the refrigerator, remove it from the bag, and put it on a platter.

Grill the chicken: Prepare a medium-hot charcoal fire with the coals banked to one side or heat a gas grill to high on one side and medium-low on the other.

Spray the chicken generously with the vegetable oil spray and set it, breast side down, on the hottest part of the grill. Cook the chicken uncovered, turning once, until the skin has deep golden



grill marks, 7 to 10 minutes. Move the chicken to the cooler side of the grill. Cover the grill and grill the chicken indirectly, turning every 5 minutes or so, until the juices run clear when the spot between the thigh and breast is pricked and an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thickest part of the thigh registers at least 165°F, another 25 to 30 minutes. Transfer the chicken to a serving platter and tent with foil. Let rest for 5 to 10 minutes. Serve with Sweet & Sour Sauce at right or let the chicken cool completely and pick off the meat to use in the recipes on pp. 64-65.

Sweet & Sour Sauce

Yields ½ cup.

This sauce is great with the grilled chicken and is used in some of the recipes that follow. It's easily doubled and keeps for a week in the refrigerator.

1 tablespoon dried red chile flakes
½ teaspoon kosher salt
¾ cup granulated sugar
¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons rice vinegar
7 cloves garlic, minced

In a small, dry saucepan, toast the chile flakes over high heat until fragrant, 1 to 2 minutes. Add the salt, sugar, and rice vinegar; cook over medium-low heat until the salt and sugar are dissolved. Stir in the garlic. Remove the sauce from the heat and let cool completely.

Three delicious ways to use extra grilled chicken

You'll need anywhere from $\frac{1}{4}$ cup to 2 cups shredded chicken for these recipes, so depending on how much you eat the first night, you may want to grill two chickens to have the right amount of meat left over. In a pinch, you can substitute store-roasted chicken in these recipes, though the flavors won't be quite as vibrant.

Curried Fried Rice with Chicken

Serves four.

I use Madras-style (hot) curry powder. For tips on cooking jasmine rice, see p. 74.

3 tablespoons vegetable oil
4 cloves garlic, minced
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons chopped fresh ginger
1 small onion, roughly chopped
1 teaspoon curry powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon chili powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground coriander
4 cups cooked jasmine rice; clumps broken up (start with $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups raw rice)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup golden raisins
3 tablespoons soy sauce; more for serving
1 cup shredded Grilled Thai Chicken (see p. 63)
1 scallion (white and green parts), thinly sliced
2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh cilantro
1 cucumber, peeled if you like, halved, seeded, and thinly sliced on the diagonal
1 lime, cut into wedges

Heat the oil in a large nonstick skillet or straight-sided sauté pan over high heat. When it's quite hot, add the garlic and stir-fry until slightly golden, about 5 seconds. Add the ginger and onion; stir-fry until the onion is softened, 3 to 4 minutes. Stir in the curry powder, chili powder, and coriander. Add the rice and raisins, blending well. Stir in the soy sauce and the chicken, blending well. Add the scallion and cilantro. Stir-fry for another 30 seconds. Transfer to a platter, garnish with cucumber and lime, and serve hot with extra soy sauce on the side.



Try wine, beer, sparkling cider, or lemonade

The Thai grilled chicken and spin-off recipes here would be great with a wide range of beverages—from wine and beer to fruit-based drinks. For wine, try a fruity, off-dry Riesling like the 2002 Mönchhof Estate Riesling (\$12) from Germany's Mosel Valley, the 2001 Monmousseau Vouvray (\$10)

from France's Loire Valley, or Chenin Blanc from Hogue Cellars in Washington State (\$9). All offer mouthwatering fruit and crisp acidity to complement the spicy elements in the marinade and curry.

I'm also a fan of beer with Thai food, and Singha (\$10 for a six-pack) is a personal favorite. You

have some refreshing nonalcoholic options here, too. Fresh lemonade, limeade, or even a sparkling cider like Martinelli's would complement all these dishes and can be enjoyed by kids and grownups alike.

Tim Gaiser, a master sommelier, is a contributing editor to Fine Cooking.



drink choices



Chicken-Apple Salad

Serves four.

This salad has a good balance of sweet, sour, salty, and spicy flavors.

FOR THE DRESSING:

½ cup Sweet & Sour Sauce

(see p. 63)

3 tablespoons fish sauce

¼ cup fresh lime juice

FOR THE SALAD:

1 orange

1 Granny Smith apple, unpeeled, cored, quartered, and thinly sliced, tossed with 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

1 shallot, thinly sliced crosswise

2 fresh Anaheim chiles or

1 green bell pepper, charred until soft, peeled, and diced

1 cup red or white seedless grapes, halved

12 leaves arugula, torn into bite-size pieces

2 cups shredded Grilled Thai Chicken (see p. 63)

¼ cup unsalted, dry-roasted peanuts, coarsely chopped

¼ cup mint leaves, crushed slightly and torn

Make the dressing: In a small mixing bowl, combine the Sweet & Sour Sauce, fish sauce, and lime juice; set aside. You should have almost 1 cup.

Assemble the salad: With a paring knife, peel the orange down to the flesh. Working over a large bowl, cut along the dividing membranes of the fruit, cutting towards the center and letting the segments fall in the bowl. Discard the membrane and the peel. Add the apple, shallot, chiles, grapes, arugula, and chicken. Toss gently. Add the dressing, gently tossing again to mix thoroughly. Transfer to a shallow bowl or platter, sprinkle with the peanuts and mint leaves, and serve.



Cool Rice Noodles with Chicken

Serves one.

Most supermarkets carry rice vermicelli, but if not, see *Where to Buy It*, p. 80.

⅓ cup Sweet & Sour Sauce (see p. 63)

2 tablespoons fish sauce

3 tablespoons fresh lime juice

¼ cup finely grated carrot

1 leaf red leaf lettuce, torn into bite-size pieces

¼ cup thinly sliced seeded cucumber

¼ cup thinly sliced sweet onion, such as Vidalia

1 ounce thin rice vermicelli, cooked following the package directions and cooled (to yield 1½ cups)

¼ cup shredded Grilled Thai Chicken (see p. 63)

1 tablespoon coarsely chopped fresh cilantro

5 mint leaves, lightly crushed and torn

2 tablespoons unsalted, dry-roasted peanuts, coarsely chopped

In a small mixing bowl, combine the Sweet & Sour Sauce, fish sauce, lime juice, and carrot. Line the bottom of a large individual serving bowl with the lettuce, cucumber, and sweet onion slices. Top with the cooked rice vermicelli. Scatter the chicken, cilantro, mint, and peanuts on top. Drizzle with the dressing, toss to combine thoroughly, and serve.

This cool rice noodle recipe serves one but is easily doubled or quadrupled, depending on how many you're serving.

Su-Mei Yu, the chef-owner of Saffron restaurant in San Diego, is the author of Asian Grilling. ♦

Ice-Cream Sandwiches

BY ABIGAIL JOHNSON DODGE

While deciding on dessert for a dinner party at the beach one summer, I remembered that my childhood beach-time treat was always an ice-cream sandwich. And then, I reasoned, if kids get them, why not grownups, too? With that in mind, I came up with a way to make a sophisticated ice-cream sandwich with great flavors and textures.

My recipe begins with a soft cookie that's sturdy enough to handle during assembly (yet not so rigid that the ice cream squishes out when you bite down), but that's soft and tender enough to remind you of the traditional ice-cream sandwich. The soft cookie, which I bake in a sheet pan, is a bit like a very thin brownie. I then sandwich store-bought ice cream between two layers of the brownie-cookie and cut the whole thing into easy-to-handle squares (from there, you can cut triangles, rectangles, or mini squares).

These ice-cream sandwiches are perfect for picnics. Wrapped individually and stowed in a portable cooler with some ice packs, the sandwiches will stay good and firm up until serving time, even on the hottest summer day.



for Grownups

A sophisticated twist on this childhood favorite combines a tender chocolate cookie, store-bought ice cream, and crunchy garnishes



Mix & Match Flavors

You can design your own sandwich combinations by choosing the ice cream, adding flavor to the chocolate cookie, and picking your favorite garnish. The flavoring possibilities are endless, but I especially recommend the following:

- ❖ chocolate-mint cookie with vanilla ice cream and crushed peppermints
- ❖ chocolate-orange cookie with raspberry sorbet
- ❖ chocolate-ginger cookie with vanilla ice cream and minced crystallized ginger
- ❖ chocolate-espresso cookie with coffee or mocha swirl ice cream and chopped pecans

ICE CREAM

vanilla
chocolate
coffee
mint chocolate chip
mocha swirl
raspberry sorbet
your favorite flavor

SOFT COOKIE

chocolate
chocolate-orange
chocolate-mint
chocolate-espresso
chocolate-ginger

GARNISHES

hard peppermint candies,
finely crushed
finely chopped or
grated bittersweet or
semisweet chocolate
crystallized ginger,
minced
pecans, finely chopped
and toasted
sweetened coconut
flakes, toasted
amaretti cookies, crushed
toffee chips, crushed

Ice-Cream Sandwiches

Yields 12 ice-cream sandwiches, each 2¾ inches square.

FOR THE SOFT CHOCOLATE COOKIE:

5⅓ ounces (1¼ cups) all-purpose flour
1½ ounces (½ cup) unsweetened, natural cocoa powder
½ teaspoon baking soda
¼ teaspoon table salt
3 ounces (6 tablespoons) unsalted butter, softened at room temperature
¾ cup granulated sugar
1½ teaspoons pure vanilla extract
¾ cup cold milk

FOR ASSEMBLY:

1 quart or 2 pints ice cream (see the sidebar on p. 67 for ideas)
1½ cups press-on garnish (optional; see the sidebar on p. 67 for ideas)

COOKIE VARIATIONS

CHOCOLATE-MINT

Add ½ teaspoon peppermint extract when you add the vanilla.

CHOCOLATE-ORANGE

Add ½ teaspoon natural orange flavor or orange extract when you add the vanilla.

CHOCOLATE-ESPRESSO

Mix in 1 level tablespoon instant coffee granules when you add the vanilla.

CHOCOLATE-GINGER

Add ½ teaspoon ground ginger to the dry ingredients.

1 Make a soft cookie

Position a rack on the center rung of the oven. Heat the oven to 350°F. Lightly grease the bottom of an 18x13-inch rimmed baking sheet. Line the pan with parchment to cover the bottom and the edges of the pan's longer sides. Combine the flour, cocoa, baking soda, and salt in a medium bowl; whisk to blend. In a large bowl, beat the butter and sugar with a hand-held electric mixer on medium high until well blended and lightened in color, about 3 minutes. Beat in the vanilla. Add about a third of the flour mixture and beat on medium low until just blended. Pour in half the milk and beat until just blended. Add another third of the flour and blend. Pour in the remaining milk and blend, and then beat in the remaining flour.

Distribute the dough evenly over the prepared pan in small dollops. Using one hand to anchor the parchment, spread the dough with a spoon or spatula. Drag a rectangular offset spatula (I like my burger flipper) over the dough to smooth it into an even layer, rotating the pan as you work. Brush or spray a sheet of parchment the same size as the pan with oil, and lay it, oiled side down, on the dough. Roll a straight rolling pin or a straight-sided wine bottle over the paper (or swipe it with a dough scraper) to level the batter. Carefully peel away the parchment. Bake until a pick inserted in the center comes out clean, 10 to 12 minutes. Set the pan on a wire rack and let cool to room temperature.



2 Layer the cookie with



ice cream, then chill

Lay two long pieces of plastic wrap in a cross shape on a baking sheet. Slide a knife along the inside edge of the pan containing the cookie to loosen it. Invert the cookie onto a large cutting board. Peel off the parchment. Using a ruler as a guide, cut the cookie crosswise into two equal pieces. Place one layer, top side down, in the middle of the plastic wrap (a wide, sturdy spatula will help the transfer).

Remove the ice cream from the freezer and take off the lid. It's important to work quickly from this point on. (If the ice cream gets too soft, pop it onto a plate and back into the freezer to harden up.) Using scissors or a sharp knife, cut the container lengthwise in two places and tear away the container, as shown above left. Set the ice cream on its side. Cut the ice cream into even slices, $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick, and arrange them on top of the brownie layer in the pan, pairing the smallest piece next to the largest.

Using a rubber spatula, gently yet firmly smear the ice cream to spread it evenly, as shown at left. (It helps to put a piece of plastic wrap on the ice cream and smear with your hands; remove the plastic before proceeding.)

Position the remaining cookie layer, top side up, over the ice cream, as shown at left. Press gently to spread the ice cream to the edges. Put a clean piece of plastic on top and wrap the long ends of the bottom sheet of plastic up and over the layers and ice cream. Put the baking sheet in the freezer and chill until the sandwich is hard, about 4 hours and up to two days.

3 Cut and garnish the sandwiches



Take the baking sheet out of the freezer. Lift the package from the pan, transfer it to a cutting board, and line the pan with a fresh piece of plastic. Peel the top layer of plastic off the sandwich (you can leave on the bottom layer.)

Working quickly, use a ruler and a long, sharp chef's knife to score the cookie, dividing it into twelve: three across the short side and four across the long side. Cut the sandwiches as shown above, wiping the blade clean as needed. (If your kitchen is very warm, put the pieces back into the freezer to firm, or work with one strip at a time, keeping the rest in the freezer).

Garnish the sandwiches, if you like: Fill a small, shallow bowl with your chosen garnish and set it next to your work surface. Press some of the garnish onto some or all of the sides of the sandwich, as shown at right. Set the sandwiches back on the baking sheet and return to the freezer immediately. (If your kitchen is warm, keep the sandwiches in the freezer and garnish one at a time.) Once the sandwiches are hard, wrap them individually in plastic and store in the freezer. They'll keep for up to two weeks.

Abby Dodge is at work on her fifth book, The Weekend Baker, which will be published by W. W. Norton. ♦



Garnishes need to be finely chopped. For uniform pieces of peppermint, crush the candies first with a rolling pin in a plastic bag. Transfer to a food processor, pulse, and sieve out big chunks with a colander.

We work a year ahead in the test kitchen. Or at least we try to. We make a huge effort to test recipes that rely on seasonal ingredients (like the arugula and strawberry shortcake features in this issue) when those ingredients are in season. I have to confess, though, that sometimes less seasonally sensitive recipes get pushed to the back

“Anyone opening a freezer door risked being buried in an avalanche of ice-cream sandwiches.”

burner, and that’s how it came to be that during this past January (one of the coldest and snowiest in recent years), we found ourselves up to our eyeballs in ice-cream sandwiches. The freezers were so stuffed with all our test batches—we had lots of flavor combos

to try out, as you’ll see in the article on p. 66—that anyone opening a freezer door risked being buried in an avalanche of ice-cream sandwiches. But that’s how it goes here in the test kitchen—Christmas in July isn’t all that unusual, either. At least we took care of all the grilling recipes last summer, because it feels pretty weird barbecuing in the shadow of a snowbank.

—Jennifer Armentrout,
test kitchen manager

Pancetta VS. Bacon



Bacon makes everything better.” That’s one of our favorite sayings in the test kitchen, and it helps explain why our recipes frequently call for it, or for its Italian cousin, pancetta. Bacon and pancetta are both made from pork bellies; the difference between them lies in how they’re prepared and cured. To make bacon, pork belly sides are brined and then smoked. Pancetta, the Italian version of bacon, is made by seasoning a pork belly side with salt and lots of pepper, curling it into a tight roll, and wrapping it in a casing to hold the shape. It’s cured, but it isn’t smoked.

Most people should have ready access to bacon in its various forms—thin- or thick-sliced, slab (unsliced)—but pancetta can be harder to find. Ask at a deli, particularly one that specializes in Italian foods. If they have it, some delis sell it in slices; others might insist you buy a minimum quantity (which they then should be willing to slice). If you can’t find pancetta, you can substitute bacon, but blanch it in boiling water first to reduce its smoky flavor since that isn’t characteristic of pancetta. Unused bacon and pancetta freeze well; wrap a few slices together in individual packets so it’s easy to thaw only the amount you need.

Peeling a melon the easy way



Cut off the melon's top and bottom ends.

Stand the melon on one of the cut ends and slice off the remaining skin in strips, taking care to hug the curves so that you're trimming only the skin and not the flesh. A flexible knife works well for this. Cut the melon in half, scoop out the seeds, and then cut up the flesh as you like.

I once worked in a restaurant where one of my duties was to prepare the Sunday brunch fruit platters. That meant peeling a lot of fruit, especially melons. Here's the quick and efficient method I used for peeling those melons. Use it whenever you want a whole peeled melon for slicing or cutting into cubes—as for the refreshing melon lemonade at right. And don't forget to wash the outside of the melon in water before peeling: Bacteria sometimes like to hang out on melon skin and can be dragged into the melon flesh by your knife as you peel off the skin.



Honeydew Lemonade

Yields 6½ cups.

Take advantage of sweet summer melons (use any variety) with this refreshing drink. Use the technique at left to peel and slice your melon.

Grated zest of 2 lemons
1 cup fresh lemon juice
¾ cup granulated sugar
1 small honeydew melon (about 3 pounds) or other melon, peeled, seeded, and cut into 1-inch cubes (to yield about 6 cups)
2 cups plain or sparkling water
Thin lemon slices for garnish

Combine the zest, lemon juice, and sugar in a small saucepan and bring to a boil. Simmer until the sugar dissolves, about 5 min. Strain and cool.

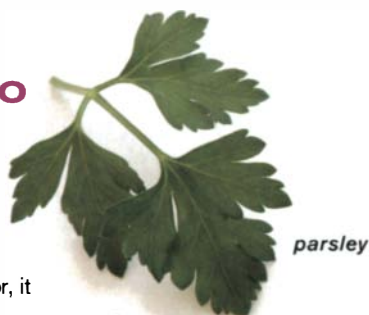
Purée the melon in a blender. In a pitcher, combine the melon purée and the cooled syrup and mix well. Chill. Just before serving, add the water and serve over ice, garnished with the lemon slices.

—John Ash,
Fine Cooking #40

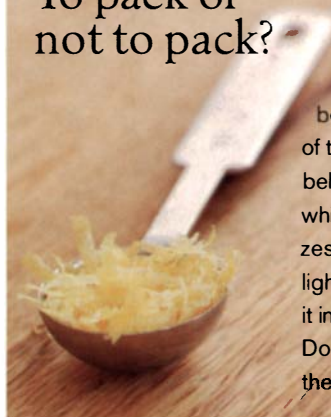
at the market

Distinguishing parsley and cilantro

In the produce aisle, I often see people staring at the bunches of flat-leaf parsley and cilantro, trying to figure out which is which. While the two look quite similar, they aren't identical, and once you know what to look for, it isn't hard to tell the difference. Compared to parsley, cilantro leaves tend to be more delicate looking. The serrations on cilantro leaves are rounded and lacy looking, whereas parsley usually has pointy serrations. Parsley is typically a slightly darker green. If you still can't tell the difference, there's nothing wrong with pinching or rubbing a leaf to check its aroma.



Zest: To pack or not to pack?



We often call for finely grated lemon zest in our recipes. The small holes on a box grater work well enough for zesting lemons, but we usually use a Microplane rasp because it gets off more of the zest while leaving behind more of the bitter white pith. When measuring zest, you should pack it lightly—just enough to get it into the measuring spoon. Don't pack it hard unless the recipe says you should.

knife skills

Cutting “across the grain”



Whenever you slice raw or cooked meat, you'll get the tenderest results if you cut across the grain. Look closely at a piece of meat and you'll see that the long muscle fibers run parallel to one another. Cutting across the grain means to slice perpendicular to the fibers, so the fibers in the cut pieces of meat become much shorter, making it easier to chew them. Certain cuts of meat that contain more than one muscle may have areas where the fibers run in different directions; watch out for these changes as you slice and adjust the direction in which you're cutting if necessary.

First-of-the-season tips for successful grilling

Whether you're just dusting off the grill or you've been cooking over fire all year, now is as good a time as any to freshen up your grilling skills. Here are some tips for steering around common grilling blunders.

—Maryellen Driscoll, editor at large

Be organized

- ❖ Have everything you need in place on a table alongside your grill: salt and pepper, olive oil, sauces or other ingredients, a good pair of long-handled tongs, a timer, an instant-read thermometer, platters for food coming off the grill, a dishtowel, and a spray bottle filled with water.

Prevent sticking

- ❖ Keep your grill grate clean and free of debris—scrub with a wire bristle brush (see *Where to Buy It*, p. 80) or crumpled foil (held with a pair of tongs if grill is hot), and then wipe the grate clean with a piece of cheesecloth or paper towel dipped in oil.
- ❖ Turn the food as infrequently as possible. Typically, it only needs to be turned once.
- ❖ Wait until the last 5 to 10 minutes of cooking to brush on barbecue sauce.
- ❖ Close the lid after grilling. This will help burn some of the residue off the grate.

Prevent flare-ups (or at least limit them)

- ❖ Empty the drip pan in your gas grill. Built-up drippings can catch fire.
- ❖ Trim excess fat from meats and fatty fish.
- ❖ Let excess marinade or oil drip off foods before setting them over the fire.
- ❖ Put a lid on any flare-ups and, when necessary, shut the air vents (fire feeds on oxygen).
- ❖ Keep a spray bottle of water nearby to extinguish flames.
- ❖ If you can do so safely, relocate foods that are causing flare-ups so that they're not directly over a flame.

Avoid cross-contamination

- ❖ Keep a separate, clean platter for cooked foods. Don't reuse the container that held raw meats or fish.
- ❖ Keep two pairs of tongs on hand—one for handling raw meats and fish on the grill and another for removing the cooked food. Grilling instructor Elizabeth Karmel keeps track by wrapping colored tape around the handles of her tongs—red for raw foods, green for cooked.
- ❖ If reusing a marinade for basting, first boil it for at least 1 minute to kill any bacteria it may have picked up from the raw meat.

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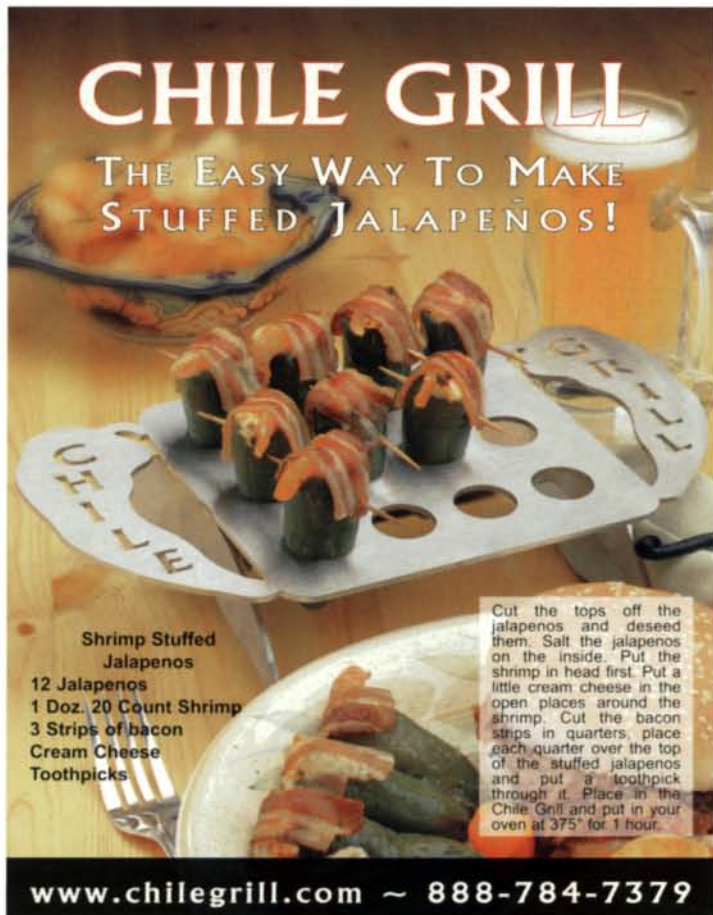
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ingredient

Jasmine & basmati rice

The next time you need some rice to accompany a stir-fry or curry, consider giving basmati or jasmine rice a try. These aromatic rices become subtly fragrant and flavorful when cooked, making them a great alternative to plain long-grain white rice.



Jasmine rice

Jasmine rice, from Thailand, has long, translucent grains. When cooked, it has a seductive, slightly floral aroma and a soft, clingy texture.

What to buy: Jasmine rice is becoming fairly easy to find in the supermarket. Domestically grown jasmine (Jasmati) is decent, but buy an imported variety if you can. It's sold in small boxes and larger cloth bags. To order by mail, see *Where to Buy It*, p. 80.

How to cook: Before cooking, jasmine rice should be washed to remove dust and excess starch. It's usually cooked either by steaming or by the absorption method, meaning that it's cooked in a measured amount of water, which the rice absorbs completely. Salt isn't usually added, but we've given it as an option. The following method uses a combination of steam and absorption cooking, and it results in beautifully textured jasmine rice.

Steamed Jasmine Rice

Serves three to four.

1 cup jasmine rice
½ teaspoon kosher salt
(optional)

Wash the rice well by putting it in a bowl and covering it with cool water. Swish the rice around with your hand until the water gets cloudy. Drain and repeat until the water gets only slightly cloudy; usually it takes about three rinses.

Drain the rice, put it in a small (1-quart) metal bowl, and stir in 1 cup cold water and the salt, if using. Fit a rack or steaming trivet into a

pot large enough to accommodate the bowl. Pour about an inch of water into the pot. Put the bowl of rice on the rack (it shouldn't touch the water in the pot), cover the pot, and bring the water in the pot to a boil over high heat. As soon as the water in the pot begins to boil, set a timer for 25 minutes and reduce the heat to maintain a steady amount of steam. When the timer goes off, take the pot off the heat and use tongs or a hot pad to remove the hot bowl from the pot. Fluff the rice with a fork and serve.

Basmati rice

Basmati comes from the Himalayan foothills of India and Pakistan. It has a very long grain that lengthens further when cooked. It stays separate and springy, and it has a delicate nutty flavor.

What to buy: Look in the rice section of your supermarket for imported basmati in small boxes or large cloth sacks. Domestic basmati, grown in California and Texas (called Texmati) is good, but it usually isn't as aromatic as imported varieties. If it's unavailable locally, see *Where to Buy It*, p. 80, for a mail-order source.

How to cook: Basmati needs to soak for half an hour or more before it's cooked. The soaking allows the grains to start absorbing water slowly so they cook more evenly and don't break up. In India, it's traditional to cook basmati by boiling it in plenty of plain water, although you can add salt to the water if you like.

Boiled Basmati Rice

Serves three to four.

1 cup basmati rice
Kosher salt (optional)

Wash the rice well, using the method described for jasmine rice, above. Drain the rice and transfer it to a large saucepan. Cover it with fresh, cool water by 1 to 2 inches and let soak for at least 30 minutes.

Put the pan over high heat and bring to a boil. Add salt to the water, if you like. When the water comes to a boil, start timing. At 3 minutes, fish out a few grains with a fork and taste them. Like pasta, they

should be cooked through but still a little firm to the bite. If not, continue boiling and tasting every 30 seconds. It may take up to 5 minutes total to reach the right texture but be careful not to overcook or the rice will get mushy.

Drain the rice and put it back in the pan. Put the pan over very low heat, cover tightly, and cook for 5 minutes to allow the rice to absorb any residual water and get drier. Take the pan off the heat and let it sit, covered, for 3 minutes. Fluff the rice with a fork and serve.

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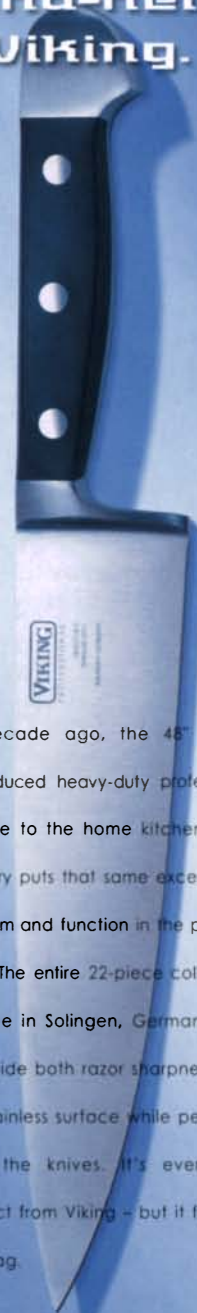
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gadget report

Hulling strawberries? A paring knife beats an awkward gadget



To test the strawberry shortcake recipes on p. 48, we had to trim a lot of strawberries. Originally, I had hoped to be able to tell you that a strawberry huller is a useful gadget, but as it turns out, this is one gizmo you can live without. We tried three different hullers, and although they did remove the hulls, they were so stiff and awkward to operate that we could see carpal tunnel syndrome looming in our futures if we kept working with them. Fact is, a paring knife, a tomato corer (also known as a tomato witch or shark), and even a sturdy metal $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon all do a fine job of hulling strawberries, and you probably already own at least one of them.

Keep picnic fare out of the danger zone

With picnic season coming up, we'd like to remind you of a few food safety precautions to take for foods that might be sitting out on the picnic table for a while. Bacteria love a moist environment, and most foods fit that description. Bacteria also grow best in temperatures between 40° to 140°F, a range known as the "danger zone." Foods shouldn't be allowed to linger in the danger zone for more than two hours (or one hour on a very hot day), so try to wait until the last moment before you take

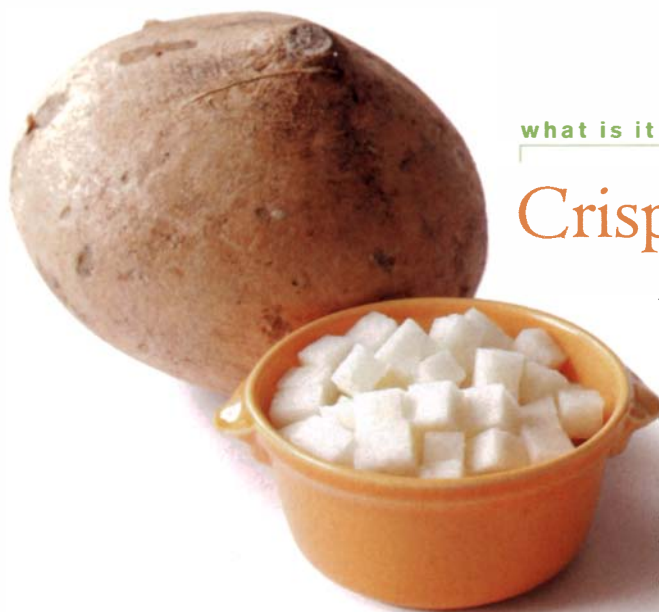
Don't blame the mayo

And now for a little known food safety fact: Whenever a mayonnaise-based potato salad is linked to a foodborne illness, chances are it was the potatoes and not the mayo that caused the illness. Commercially produced mayonnaise is usually quite safe, but there is a certain strain of bacteria (*Bacillus cereus*) that loves cooked starches like potatoes and rice. So whenever you're making potato or pasta salad, cool the salad quickly by spreading it on a platter and putting it in the fridge, and keep it chilled until just before serving.

foods out of the refrigerator or cooler. If you intend to leave foods out for longer than two hours (which isn't recommended, but we've all been known to do it), set them over ice to keep them as cool as possible, and keep them covered when you can.

what is it?

Crisp jícama for salads or snacks



Jícama (pronounced HEE-kah-mah) is a tuber that looks like a squashed softball with rough, papery brown skin. It has crisp juicy flesh, kind of like a very crunchy, unsweet apple. Look in the fresh produce department of your grocery store for a jícama that feels solid and heavy, not soft or shriveled. Cut the jícama in half with a large knife and then peel off the skin and about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch of the more fibrous flesh below the skin with a paring knife. If you'll

be using the whole jícama, you can also peel it like a melon as shown on p. 71. Once it's peeled, it's very easy to slice and dice. In addition to using it in the bean salad on p. 46, try slicing jícama into sticks and sprinkling them with lime juice, chili powder, and salt for a refreshing snack. Jícama doesn't need refrigeration until it's been peeled or cut.

—Martha Holmberg,
publisher and editor in chief

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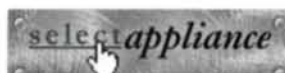
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tasting panel

Vanilla Ice Cream

While testing the recipes for the ice-cream sandwiches in this issue (see p. 66), the subject of the best store-bought ice cream became a hot topic of conversation. It seemed fitting, then, to hold a blind tasting of mass-market vanilla ice creams to find out which ones truly taste tops. We limited the tasting to custard-style vanilla ice creams (that is, those enriched with egg yolks). Companies often distinguish this as “French vanilla,” although half the brands didn’t make this differentiation and labeled their ice cream simply as “vanilla.” One surprise: The ice creams speckled with dark flecks of vanilla bean proved to have the poorest quality vanilla flavor. Here’s a rundown of the results, listed in order of preference.

—M. D.



top pick

EDY'S DREAMERY

\$3.29 for 1 pint

This was perhaps the most luxurious, with a creamy consistency that one taster said, “rolls around your tongue and clings to your cheeks.” The well-stated vanilla flavor “tastes natural, rich, and full-flavored yet refreshing—it doesn’t bog down your palate.” It wasn’t overly sweet, either.

TASTING RESULTS

Ice creams numbered in order of preference.



2 DOUBLE RAINBOW

\$3.49 for 1 quart

This ice cream was smooth and richly creamy “without being too mouth-coatingly fatty.” The level of vanilla flavor was pleasant and even but not especially assertive. It was the most characteristically custardy in style, with subtle, eggy undertones that not all tasters preferred.



3 HÄAGEN-DAZS

\$5.79 for 1 quart

Distinguished by a perfect balance of density and creaminess, its velvety smooth texture was the clear selling point. The vanilla flavor was clean, nothing off-putting, but “a little weak.” One taster noted, “This would be good with pie or something strong-flavored, but I wouldn’t sit down with a plain bowl of it.”



4 EDY'S GRAND

\$5.29 for 1.75 quarts

The texture was pleasantly creamy without feeling fatty. This ice cream had a nice, upfront vanilla flavor hit. It quickly fell off, however, leaving the ice cream “lacking in flavor oomph” and tasting more like “vanilla lite.” Flecks of vanilla bean gave only the appearance of real vanilla flavor.



5 BREYERS

\$4.59 for a half gallon

The texture of this ice cream was less unctuous and “more ice-milkish” than rich, creamy, or velvety—though not unpleasant. Flecks of vanilla bean once again seemed to mislead. There was only a “subtle kick” of vanilla flavor. Fortunately, the sweetness level was balanced and didn’t overpower.



6 BEN & JERRY'S

\$3.49 for a pint

This was the only ice cream that was “just not satisfying on any score.” The texture verged on gummy, and the vanilla flavor didn’t make up for that. It was described as “unremarkable,” artificial-tasting, and “vaguely alcoholic, like cheap vanilla extract.”

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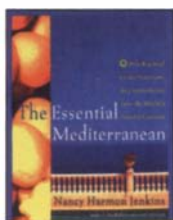
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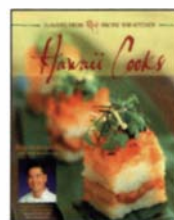
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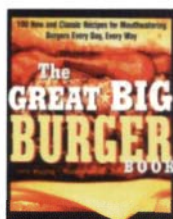
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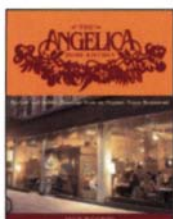
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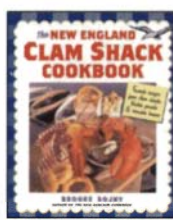
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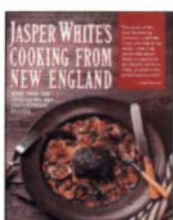
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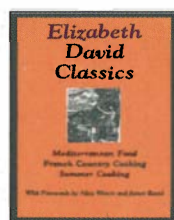
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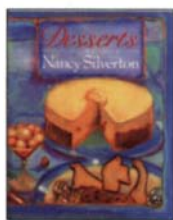
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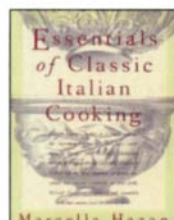
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Dinner with Friends

p. 34

Be sure to brush your grill clean before searing the top sirloin in this menu. You can order an 18-inch, hardwood-handled Weber brush at Weberstuff.com (417-781-0997) for \$9.95.

Cuisines p. 28

To buy garam masala online for cooking Suneeta Vaswani's chicken curry, visit iShopIndian.com (877-786-8876) which carries several varieties of the spice mix, including a 50-gram box of shan garam masala for \$1.19 (which includes caraway, nutmeg, bay leaf, and saffron, among other spices) and a 3½-ounce tin of rajah garam masala for \$2.99. You can also find garam masala at **Penzey's** (www.penzeys.com or 800-741-7787); a 1.05-ounce jar is \$2.79.

Bean Salads p. 44

To buy some of the more exotic varieties of dried beans like Flor de Mayo and Desert Pebble, look up **Phipps Country Store & Farm** (www.phippscounrty.com; 650-879-0787). For good-quality canned organic beans look for ones from Eden Foods, Westbrae Natural, and ShariAnn's at **Whole Foods** (www.wholefoods.com; 512-477-4455) or in your local natural foods store. Westbrae Natural markets heirloom bean varieties like Jackson Wonder and Scarlet Runner.

Strawberry Shortcake p. 48

A sturdy bench knife is great for dividing the shortcake dough. You can find one with a wooden handle and a stainless-steel blade for \$11 at **Bridgekitchenware.com** (212-688-4220). To keep your shortcakes from sticking during baking, line the baking sheets with parchment, which is available in most supermarkets, or try **The Baker's Catalogue** (www.kingarthurflour.com; 800-827-6836), where 100 sheets of parchment that fit perfectly into a half sheet pan are \$14.95.



FROM THE BACK COVER

For more information about **Thompson Farms**, call 503-658-4640.

Stir-Fries p. 53

A good wooden spatula is perfect for sautéing and stir-frying, and the best have a diagonal edge, which makes it easy to get into the corners of a pan or stir in a sauce. **Happycookers.com** (831-637-6444) has a good selection, ranging from a stir-fry set of three bamboo tools from Joyce Chen, which includes a spatula, a rice paddle, and a slotted spatula (\$5.99) to a single beechwood spatula (\$6.99). **Whetstonewoodenware.com** (800-253-3670) also carries a variety of edged wooden spatulas, most of them for around \$4. **AsiaFoods.com** (877-867-3101) carries a 13-ounce jar of black bean and garlic sauce for \$3.69, as well as an 18-ounce bottle of Huy Fong Siracha Chili Sauce for \$3.59. Both sauces are great for making stir-fries.

Arugula p. 58

It's easy to grow arugula. For seeds, try **Renee's Garden** (www.reneesgarden.com or 888-880-7228), **Heirloomseeds.com** (412-384-0852), or **Kitchengardenseeds.com** (860-567-6086).



Thai Chicken p. 62

Ethnicgrocer.com (866-438-4642) is a great place to stock up on Asian ingredients. Different brands of vermicelli rice noodles are available from \$1.39 a pound.

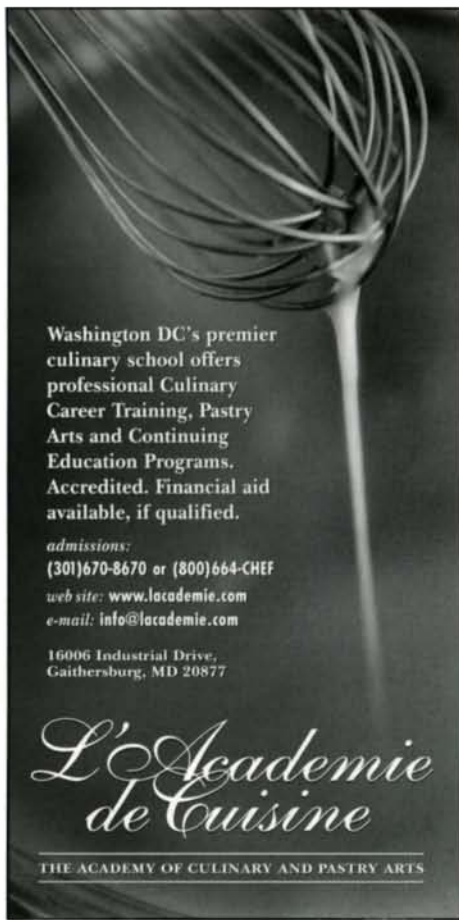


Ice-Cream Sandwiches p. 66

Crystallized ginger for garnishing your ice-cream sandwiches is often sold in the spice section of the supermarket. You can also order it from **Royal Pacific Foods** (www.gingerpeople.com; 800-551-5284). A 3½-ounce package is \$2.

From Our Test Kitchen p. 70

Look for pancetta at Italian specialty stores or online from the Boston retailer **Salumeria Italiana** (800-400-5916; www.salumeriaitaliana.com), which carries pancetta for \$12 a pound. To order imported jasmine and basmati rice, check out **Orientalpantry.com** (978-264-4576). A 5-pound bag of jasmine rice from Thailand is \$4.09 and a 4-pound bag of basmati rice from India is \$6.29.



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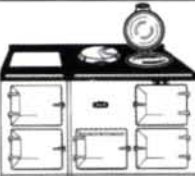
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Recipe (analysis per serving)	Calories		Protein (g)	Carb (g)	Fats (g)				Chol (mg)	Sodium (mg)	Fiber (g)	Notes
	total	from fat			total	sat	mono	poly				
In Season, p. 20												
Potato Salad w/Cilantro	300	160	3	32	18	2	13	2	0	690	3	based on 6 servings based on 6 servings (w/o chips)
Cilantro-Lime Guacamole	110	90	1	6	10	1	7	1	0	250	3	
World Cuisines, p. 28												
Indian Chicken Curry	280	100	32	15	11	2	5	3	115	990	3	based on 6 servings
Dinner with Friends, p. 34												
Grilled Top Sirloin	270	110	39	0	12	4	5	1	105	570	0	w/½ tsp. oil per entire steak
Red-Wine-Braised Shallots	130	40	2	16	4	2.5	1	0	10	290	1	
Grilled Bread Salad w/Tomatoes & Greens	270	140	7	30	15	2	10	3	0	490	5	
Roasted Red & Yellow Pepper Salad	90	60	1	6	7	1	5	1	0	290	2	
Zabaglione w/Summer Fruit	310	180	4	26	19	11	6	1	200	50	2	
Bruschetta, p. 40												
Bruschetta	200	110	4	23	12	2	8	1	0	230	2	based on 10 servings w/o topping per tablespoon per tablespoon per tablespoon per tablespoon, w/¼ tsp olive oil per tablespoon
Chopped Tomato w/Garlic & Basil	15	10	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	60	0	
Warm Herbed Goat Cheese	70	50	3	0	6	3	2	0	10	75	0	
Rustic Green Olive Tapenade	30	25	1	1	3	0.5	2	0.5	15	230	0	
Fresh Ricotta w/Lemon, Pepper & Mint	40	30	2	1	3.5	1.5	1.5	0	10	250	0	
Anchoiade w/Figs & Walnuts	60	30	2	6	3.5	0.5	1.5	1.5	5	250	1	
Bean Salads, p. 44												
White Beans w/Garlic, Lemon & Parmesan	220	90	10	25	10	2	7	1	0	780	6	based on 6 servings
Pink Beans w/Roasted Pepper, Lemon & Herbs	220	90	8	27	10	1	7	1	0	650	5	based on 6 servings
Black Beans w/Mango, Citrus & Jicama	240	70	8	38	7	1	5	1	0	650	10	based on 6 servings
Strawberry Shortcakes, p. 48												
Traditional Strawberry Shortcakes	640	410	7	52	46	28	13	2	150	470	3	
Lemon-Poppyseed Shortcakes w/Berries	660	400	7	62	44	27	13	3	145	470	5	
Chocolate Strawberry Shortcakes	660	410	8	61	46	28	14	2	130	470	7	
Stir-Fries, p. 53												
Chicken Stir-Fry w/Sesame-Soy Sauce	290	100	30	19	12	2	3	6	65	680	5	based on 4 servings per tablespoon per tablespoon per tablespoon per tablespoon
Sesame-Soy Sauce	25	15	0	2	1.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0	230	0	
Cantonese Orange Sauce	15	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	85	0	
Spicy Sichuan Sauce	15	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	110	0	
Chinese Black Bean Sauce	20	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	60	0	
Arugula, p. 58												
Arugula Salad w/Nectarines & Vinaigrette	160	130	1	10	14	2	10	1	0	250	2	based on 6 servings
Pasta w/ Peas, Arugula & Prosciutto	620	250	30	60	28	12	11	2	70	2175	5	
Warm Arugula, Shrimp & Potato Salad	600	380	27	30	42	6	30	5	200	1560	4	
Beef Tenderloin w/Arugula & Mushrooms	580	390	41	10	43	20	17	2	170	610	3	
Grilled Thai Chicken, p. 62												
Grilled Thai Chicken	490	260	53	2	28	8	11	7	210	540	0	based on 4 servings, w/skin per tablespoon
Sweet & Sour Sauce	80	0	0	20	0	0	0	0	0	120	0	
Curried Fried Rice w/Chicken	490	130	17	75	15	3	4	7	30	830	4	
Chicken-Apple Salad	460	110	26	65	13	3	5	4	65	1550	4	
Cool Rice Noodles w/Chicken	750	120	23	142	14	2	6	4	30	3560	5	
Ice-Cream Sandwiches, p. 66												
Ice Cream Sandwiches	290	130	4	37	15	9	4	1	65	180	2	per sandwich, without garnishes
From Our Test Kitchen, p. 70												
Honeydew Lemonade	160	0	1	43	0	0	0	0	0	20	2	per cup
Steamed Jasmine Rice	120	0	2	27	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	based on 4 servings
Boiled Basmati Rice	130	0	2	29	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	based on 4 servings
Quick & Delicious, p. 86C												
Wilted Curried Cabbage Slaw	180	120	2	16	14	2	10	1	0	510	3	based on 8 servings
Grilled Soy-Glazed Chicken & Scallions	380	140	30	25	16	3	4	7	115	840	2	
Southwestern Tuna w/Grilled Summer Salad	300	130	34	12	14	2	9	2	65	540	3	
Seared Turkey & White Bean Burgers	380	160	18	38	18	4	10	3	100	910	5	based on 3 servings based on 4 servings
Asparagus & Pancetta Frittata	270	170	20	7	19	6	8	2	375	1150	1	
Broiled Tomatoes w/Feta & Herbed Couscous	360	200	8	34	23	5	15	2	15	550	3	
Creamy Lemon Parfait	510	340	6	41	37	23	11	2	130	190	5	based on 8 servings
Warm Chocolate-Nut Brownie	320	190	5	34	21	5	5	10	55	110	2	

The nutritional analyses have been calculated by a registered dietitian at The Food Consulting Company of San Diego, California. When a recipe gives a choice of ingredients, the first choice is the one used in the

calculations. Optional ingredients and those listed without a specific quantity are not included. When a range of ingredient amounts or servings is given, the smaller amount or portion is used. When the

quantity of salt and pepper aren't specified, the analysis is based on ¼ teaspoon salt and ⅛ teaspoon pepper per serving for entrées, and ⅛ teaspoon salt and ⅛ teaspoon pepper per serving for side dishes.

AUSTRALIAN LAMB

easy as one, two, three



ONE. PREHEAT
YOUR BBQ OR
GRILL ON HIGH



TWO. COOK AUSTRALIAN
LAMB LOIN CHOPS FOR
2 MINUTES.



THREE. BASTE WITH ROSEMARY
AND GARLIC AND COOK FOR
3 MINUTES MORE EACH SIDE.

SENSATIONAL!

Summer means outdoor living and with Australian Lamb on your BBQ, you can have a delicious, quick and easy meal. In one bite, you'll know why no other lamb compares in flavor. A pure, all-natural diet ensures the sweet and mild taste of Fresh Australian Premium Lamb. Visit our website to find more quick and easy lamb recipes.



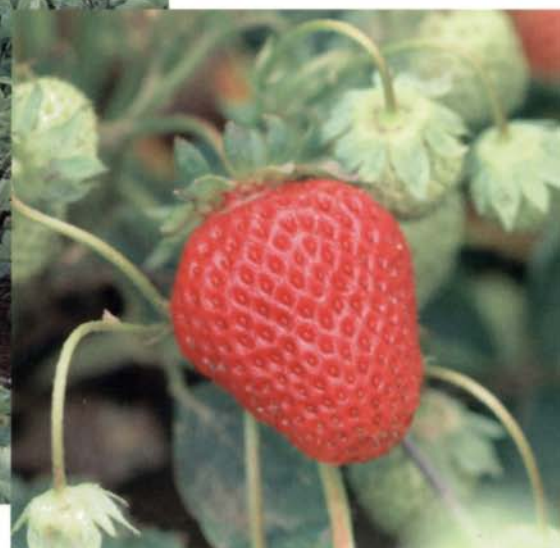
Australian Lamb.

For this Grilled Lamb Loin Chop recipe and others,
please visit www.australian-lamb.com.
Also, check out the listing of retailers near you.



Larry Thompson and his mother, Betty, check on berries as they ripen. Betty started the farm with her husband back in 1947, and she's still hands-on.

Sun for ripeness, rain for size. A good-tasting strawberry needs a balance of both.



Down the road from the farm, the Thompsons' farmstand sells just-picked berries.



Family-grown Strawberries, full of flavor

Thompson Farms in Boring, Oregon, grows many crops, but extremely tasty strawberries are one of their specialties. Varieties include Puget Summer, Hood, and Rainier, which are hustled to the family farmstand and farmers' markets right after picking. "Other varieties provide bigger yields, are more resistant to disease, and stand up better during shipping, but they just don't taste as good as varieties meant to be sold ripe for market," says Larry.

In keeping with sustainable farming practices, the Thompsons rely on cover crops (rather than pesticides) to control weeds and to attract beneficial insects. They rotate crops every three years to maintain the farm's balanced, healthy soil. But in addition to



taking care of the land, sustainable farming means taking care of the workers. Thompson Farms depends on a steady staff who have been with them for years. "There's very little turnaround here because we have a smaller crew. They're guaranteed more work that way. They're a part of our family."

—Amy Albert, senior editor ♦

Kitchen Basics



Has this ever happened to you? You're at the market, knowing that you need a cup of chopped parsley for a recipe, but you have no idea how much parsley you should buy to get that cup. Or maybe you're dying to bake some chocolate-chip cookies, but you're out of brown sugar. We've been there too, and that's why we decided to put together this collection of the information you need in situations like these—ingredient substitutions and equivalents, roasting times and temperatures, all sorts of measurement equivalents, plus our best tips and advice for recipe success. So stash this foldout section in a safe place, because one of these days, you're going to need it.

—the *Fine Cooking* staff

Shelf life: How long will it last?

These guidelines for safe storage times are based on USDA recommendations and on our own experiences with freezing food. Food frozen a little longer than these guidelines won't necessarily be unsafe, but its texture and flavor will suffer. Buy a couple of refrigerator/freezer thermometers so you can be sure that your refrigerator is always 33° to 40°F and your freezer is 0°F or below.

	refrigerated	frozen
Beef, pork, lamb, veal	3 to 5 days	4 to 6 months for steaks, chops, and roasts
Chicken, turkey	2 days	6 months
Ground meat	1 to 2 days	3 to 4 months
Sausage, raw	1 to 2 days	1 to 2 months
Ham, whole, fully cooked	1 week	1 to 2 months
Bacon	1 week	2 months
Fish	1 to 2 days	3 months
Sliced deli meat	3 to 5 days	1 to 2 months
Bread, rolls, breadcrumbs	not recommended	1 month
Casseroles	3 to 4 days	2 to 3 months
Soups, stews	3 to 4 days	2 to 3 months
Broth, stock	1 to 2 days	2 to 3 months

Is it done?

Roasting times & temperatures

Poultry	Oven temperature and estimated time	Doneness indicator
Chicken , whole (about 3½ pounds)	400°F for about 1 hour	170°F in the thickest part of the thigh
Chicken , butterflied (about 3½ pounds)	475°F for about 40 minutes	170°F in the thickest part of the thigh
Chicken , bone-in parts	425°F for 50 to 60 minutes	well browned and 170°F
Turkey , whole (about 14 pounds)	325°F for about 3½ hours unstuffed; 4 hours stuffed	170°F in the thickest part of the thigh (the center of the stuffing should be 165°F)
Cornish hens (about 1½ pounds each)	425°F for 40 to 45 minutes unstuffed; 45 to 50 minutes stuffed	170°F in the thickest part of the thigh (the center of the stuffing should be 165°F)
Beef	Oven temperature and estimated time	Doneness indicator
Tenderloin , whole (3½ to 4 pounds, trimmed)	375°F for about 45 to 50 minutes	125°F for medium rare
Prime rib , 3-rib standing rib roast (6 to 7 pounds)	450°F for 15 minutes, then drop to 350°F for about 1 hour	120°F for rare; 125°F for medium rare
Pork	Oven temperature and estimated time	Doneness indicator
Loin roast , 6-rib bone-in (about 4 pounds) or boneless (3 to 4 pounds)	425°F for 30 minutes, then drop to 375°F for about 30 minutes	145°F in the center
Tenderloin (about 1 pound; browned before roasting)	425°F for 10 to 15 minutes	145°F in the center
Lamb	Oven temperature and estimated time	Doneness indicator
Whole leg , bone-in (6 to 8 pounds) or boneless (5 pounds)	375°F for about 1½ hours for bone-in; 1¾ hours for a boned, rolled roast	125°F for medium rare; 135°F for medium
Rib rack , 8-rib bone-in (1 to 1½ pounds)	425°F for 25 to 35 minutes	125°F for medium rare
Vegetables	Oven temperature and estimated time	Doneness indicator
Beets , ½-inch slices	450°F for 20 to 25 minutes	soft and shrunken, thinnest slices will be crisp
Beets , wedges	400°F for about 1½ hours	tender with caramelized bottoms
Carrots , ¼-inch diagonal slices	450°F for about 20 minutes	tender and golden brown in spots
Cauliflower , florets	400°F for 25 to 35 minutes	golden brown and crisp-tender
Garlic , whole heads, tops trimmed	350°F for 45 to 60 minutes	cloves will be golden and head will feel soft
Mushrooms , portabellas	450°F for 20 to 30 minutes	tender and browned
Onions , red, ¼- to ¾-inch slices	450°F for 22 to 24 minutes	tender and brown in spots
Parsnips , 2x½-inch sticks	425°F for about 30 minutes	tender and golden brown in spots
Potatoes , waxy (whole if small, halved or cut into chunks if large)	375°F for 50 to 60 minutes	tender throughout with skins somewhat shriveled and crisp
Squash , acorn, halved crosswise	400°F for about 1 hour 15 minutes	nicely browned and very tender
Sweet potatoes , 1-inch chunks	400°F for 40 to 45 minutes	tender and golden brown in spots
Turnips , 1-inch chunks	400°F for 45 to 55 minutes	tender and golden brown in spots

Cooking Math

If you want to make a double or triple batch of a recipe, or try a dish from a foreign cookbook, you'll need to do a little simple math. Keeping these charts handy will make it even easier. Remember that baking recipes can be tricky to adjust, and it might take you a few tries to get the proportions just right.

volume equivalents

1 tablespoon	=	3 teaspoons	=	½ fluid ounce	=	14.8 milliliters
¼ cup	=	4 tablespoons	=	2 fluid ounces	=	59.2 milliliters
⅓ cup	=	5 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon	=	2⅔ fluid ounces	=	78.9 milliliters
½ cup	=	8 tablespoons	=	4 fluid ounces	=	118.4 milliliters
1 cup	=	16 tablespoons	=	8 fluid ounces	=	236.8 milliliters
1 pint	=	2 cups	=	16 fluid ounces	=	473.6 milliliters
1 quart	=	2 pints (4 cups)	=	32 fluid ounces	=	947.2 milliliters
1 gallon	=	4 quarts (8 pints, 16 cups)	=	128 fluid ounces	=	3.79 liters

weight equivalents

1 pound
equals
16 ounces
equals
453.6 grams

1 kilogram
equals
2.2 pounds

metric to U.S. and back again

❖ To convert liters to cups, multiply the number of liters by 4.22675.

1 liter = about 4¼ cups

2 liters = about 8½ cups

❖ To convert cups to liters, multiply the number of cups by 0.2368.

❖ To convert grams to ounces and pounds, divide grams by 28.35 for ounces; divide grams by 453.6 for pounds.

❖ To convert ounces and pounds to grams, multiply ounces by 28.35; multiply pounds by 453.6.

Fahrenheit to Celsius and back again

❖ To convert from degrees Fahrenheit to Celsius, subtract 32 from the Fahrenheit temperature, then multiply by 5, and divide by 9.

❖ To convert degrees Celsius to Fahrenheit, multiply the Celsius temperature by 9, divide by 5, and then add 32.

Oven Temperatures

Fahrenheit (°F)	Celsius (°C; rounded)	Gas Mark
225	110	¼
250	120	½
275	140	1
300	150	2
325	170	3
350	180	4
375	190	5
400	200	6
425	220	7
450	230	8
475	240	9

Ingredient Equivalents

A common kitchen quandary—a recipe calls for mincing a large clove of garlic, and all you have are what seem like small cloves—how much garlic do you need to mince? Or maybe you're making a pie that calls for 7 cups of sliced apples. How many apples do you need to buy at the store? This chart gives you the answers so that you can be all the more prepared in the kitchen—and at the supermarket.

Dry Goods

	Weight	Approximate yield
Beans, black 1 cup uncooked	6½ ounces	3 cups cooked
Beans, kidney & Great Northern 1 cup uncooked	6½ ounces	2¾ cups cooked
Rice, arborio 1 cup uncooked	7 ounces	2⅔ cup cooked
Rice, long-grain white 1 cup uncooked	6½ ounces	3 cups cooked
Rice, medium-grain 1 cup uncooked	6¾ ounces	3 cups cooked
Couscous 1 cup uncooked	6½ ounces	3½ cups cooked
Penne uncooked	1 pound	8 cups cooked
Spaghetti uncooked	1 pound	8¾ cups cooked
Almonds, hazelnuts, & peanuts, whole shelled 1 cup	5 to 5½ ounces	1 cup coarsely chopped; 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons finely chopped; 1¼ cups ground
Pecan & walnut halves 1 cup	4 ounces	¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons coarsely chopped; 1 cup finely chopped; 1 cup ground
Breadcrumbs, fresh from about 2½ slices sandwich bread, with crust	2¼ ounces	1 cup

Dairy

	Weight	Approximate yield
Cheddar	2 ounces	½ cup lightly packed, coarsely grated
Parmesan	½ ounce	¼ cup lightly packed, finely grated
Eggs 1 large	2 ounces	¾ tablespoons (1 tablespoon yolk; 2¼ tablespoons white)

Fruits & Vegetables

	Weight	Approximate yield (after trimming)
Carrot 1 medium	2½ ounces	½ cup coarsely grated; ⅓ cup small (¼-inch) dice; ½ cup ¼-inch-slices
Celery 1 medium rib	2¼ ounces	⅔ cup small (¼-inch) dice; ⅔ cup ¼-inch slices
Garlic 1 large clove	¼ ounce	1 teaspoon paste; 1½ teaspoons minced; 1 tablespoon coarsely chopped
Leek 1 medium	6 ounces (3 ounces white and pale green part only)	1 cup medium (½-inch) dice; 1½ cups ¼-inch slices
Onion 1 medium	8 ounces	1⅓ cups minced; 1½ cups medium (½-inch) dice; 2⅓ cups thin (⅛-inch) slices
Bell pepper 1 medium	7 ounces	1 cup fine (⅛-inch) dice; 1⅓ cups medium (½-inch) dice; 1½ cups thin (⅛-inch) slices
Potato, red 1 medium	5 ounces	1 cup medium (½-inch) dice
Potato, russet 1 medium	12 ounces	2¼ cups medium (½-inch) dice
Shallot 1 large	¾ ounce	3 tablespoons minced
Tomato 1 medium	5 ounces	1 cup medium (½-inch) dice
Mushrooms, white	8 ounces	3 cups thin (⅛-inch) slices
Olives, kalamata ½ cup whole	3 ounces	scant ½ cup pitted and coarsely chopped
Parsley, flat-leaf 1 small bunch	3 ounces	½ cup lightly packed chopped
Apple 1 medium	7 ounces	1⅓ cups medium (½-inch) dice; 1 cup thin (⅛-inch) slices
Lemon 1 medium	5 ounces	4 to 5 tablespoons unstrained juice; 2 tablespoons lightly packed zest when grated with a rasp; 1 tablespoon zest when grated on a box grater
Lime 1 medium	4 ounces	3 to 4 tablespoons unstrained juice; 4 teaspoons lightly packed zest when grated with a rasp; 2 teaspoons zest when grated on a box grater
Orange, navel 1 medium	10 ounces	6 to 7 tablespoons unstrained juice; 2 tablespoons lightly packed zest when grated with a rasp; 1 tablespoon zest when grated on a box grater

In a Pinch: Substitutions

Just because you don't have an ingredient doesn't necessarily mean you can't make the recipe. Here's a list of some ingredients that come pretty close to the real deal if you want to make substitutions. Watch out for baking recipes, though; they're less forgiving than other recipes, and hasty substitutions can easily throw things out of balance. So, if you're making a cake and find yourself short on butter, a trip to the store is worth your while.

Pantry Items

	substitution
Aniseed	fennel seed
Allspice, ground	2 parts ground cinnamon plus 1 part ground cloves (by volume)
Arrowroot	cornstarch (as long as chilling or freezing is not involved)
Black pepper	white pepper, allspice, or savory
Breadcrumbs, dry	cracker crumbs, matzoh meal, crushed corn flakes
Capers	chopped green olives
Chile paste	red pepper flakes, cayenne, bottled hot sauce
Chocolate, bittersweet	semisweet chocolate
Chocolate, unsweetened baking, 1 ounce	3 tablespoons natural cocoa powder plus 1 tablespoon melted butter
Currants	dark raisins
Dates	dark raisins
Flour, self-rising, 1 cup	1 cup all-purpose flour plus 1½ teaspoons baking powder and ½ teaspoon salt
Mustard, dry, 1 teaspoon	1 tablespoon prepared mustard
Porcini mushrooms (cèpes), dried	dried shiitake mushrooms
Pine nuts	blanched, slivered almonds
Rice wine	dry sherry
Sugar, brown	light and dark may be used interchangeably; to make your own, pulse in a food processor 1 cup white granulated sugar with 3 to 4 tablespoons molasses (yields 1 cup)
Sugar, superfine	grind granulated white sugar in a blender or food processor
Vanilla bean, 2-inch piece	1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Vinegar, sherry	balsamic vinegar
Yeast, 1 packet active dry (2¼ teaspoons)	1 packet quick-rise, or ¾ of a packet instant, or a 0.6-ounce cube fresh

Fruits & Vegetables

	substitution
Chile, Scotch bonnet	habanero chile
Chile, serrano	jalapeño chile
Chives	scallion greens
Celery	green pepper or fennel bulb
Cremini or baby bella mushrooms	white mushrooms
Fava beans	lima beans
Fresh herbs	1 teaspoon dry for each tablespoon chopped fresh
Leeks	shallots
Lemon juice	white-wine vinegar or lime juice
Shallots	scallions, white part only
Snow peas	sugar snap peas
Tomatillo	fresh green tomatoes plus a little lemon juice
Tomatoes, 1 pound fresh	14-ounce can whole peeled tomatoes with juice

Meat & Dairy

	substitution
Bacon	smoked ham or Canadian bacon
Butter	vegetable oil, olive oil, margarine (for cooking, not baking)
Buttermilk, 1 cup	1 cup plain low-fat yogurt, or 1 cup minus 1 tablespoon milk plus 1 tablespoon lemon juice or white vinegar
Cottage cheese	ricotta or farmer cheese
Cream, heavy, 1 cup	for whipping, use 1 cup whipping cream; if not for whipping, use ¾ cup milk plus ¼ cup melted butter
Crème fraîche, 1 cup	½ cup sour cream plus ½ cup heavy cream
Goat cheese	feta cheese
Jicama	water chestnuts or tart apple
Mascarpone	cream cheese
Milk, 1 cup	mix ½ cup evaporated milk with ½ cup water, or mix 1 cup water with 3 tablespoons powdered milk
Pancetta	blanched bacon
Parmigiano Reggiano	domestic Parmesan, Grana Padano, aged Asiago, Pecorino Romano
Sour cream	plain yogurt

Baking pans

If you don't have the exact size baking pan called for in a recipe, in most cases you can substitute a pan of the same capacity. Just make sure your substitute pan has sides that are of similar height. A pan with taller or shorter sides will affect the rate of cooking and could ruin something like a cake. Also, be careful about substituting for a tube pan. If it's a delicate cake, such as angel food, the tube in the center of the pan is critical for proper cooking. To measure any pan not found on this list, fill the pan with water to within $\frac{1}{4}$ inch of the rim and measure the volume of water.

Capacity of standard baking pans

square pans

8x8x2 inches	8 cups
9x9x2 inches	10 cups

rectangular pans

11x7x2 inches	8 cups
13x9x2 inches	12 cups

loaf pans

8½x2½x2½ inches	6 cups
9x5x3 inches	8 cups

round pans

8x2 inches	7 cups
9x2 inches	8 cups
9x3 inches	12 cups
10x2 inches	10 cups

springform pans

9x2½ inches	10 cups
10x2¾ inches	15 cups

tube pans

9x3 inches	10 cups
9½x4 inches	16 cups

Tips & advice For getting the most from your recipes

How to follow a recipe

- ❖ Before you start, read the recipe from start to finish so there are no surprises.
- ❖ Before actually starting to cook or bake, gather all the necessary ingredients and equipment. Prepare the ingredients according to the directions in the ingredient list (see below for more on this).
- ❖ For determining doneness, always rely first on the recipe's sensory descriptor, such as "cook until golden brown." Consider any times given in a recipe merely as a guide for when to start checking for doneness.

Watch those modifiers

A recipe ingredient list contains words like "diced" and "chopped" that tell you how to prepare each ingredient for the recipe, but what you may not realize is that the placement of these "preparation modifiers" in the ingredient line is as important as the modifier itself. Take for example the following two similar lines that you might see in a recipe ingredient list:

1 cup rice, cooked

1 cup cooked rice

The first line is telling you to take 1 cup of rice and cook it; the second line is calling for 1 cup of rice that has already been cooked. The difference between the two is about 2 cups of cooked rice, and that can make a big difference in the outcome of a recipe.

Calibrate everything

Ovens, thermometers, and scales all need to be checked occasionally to make sure they're still reading true.

- ❖ Keep an oven thermometer in your oven at all times to be sure it's heating properly. If the thermometer shows an inconsistency, either learn how to adjust the temperature setting to compensate or call a professional to recalibrate the oven.

Replace your oven thermometer if it shows signs of excessive wear, or if it gets dropped frequently.

- ❖ To check your instant-read thermometer, take the temperature of ice water (33 to 34°F) and boiling water (212°F or less depending on altitude). You can adjust bi-metal thermometers (the ones with a face like a clock) by turning the hexagonal nut at the top of the stem with pliers. Digital thermometers can't be adjusted.
- ❖ Check your scale frequently by weighing known quantities, like a 4-ounce chocolate bar. Weigh several different items, because sometimes package labeling isn't as accurate as it should be.

Give your oven plenty of time to heat up

Don't rely on your oven's preheat signal; it often goes off prematurely. Instead, let your oven heat for at least 20 minutes before baking anything.

Weigh your flour

In baking, if ingredients are listed by weight as well as by volume, measure by weight for the greatest accuracy. This is especially true for flour. Measuring flour by the cup can be wildly inaccurate due to differences in the actual volume capacity of measuring cups (not all measuring cups are created equal) and the way in which different cooks get the flour into the cup (some scoop, some spoon).

A pint isn't necessarily a pound

Don't confuse fluid ounces with ounces. Fluid ounces are a measure of volume; ounces are a measure of weight. For example, 8 fluid ounces (1 cup) of honey weighs 12 ounces. The only time you can be positive fluid ounces and ounces are equal is when you're measuring water.



Grilled Soy-Glazed Chicken Thighs & Scallions

Serves four.

¾ cup dry sherry
½ cup low-salt soy sauce
¼ cup honey
3 Tbs. vegetable oil
1 large clove garlic,
minced
¾ tsp. ground ginger
½ tsp. coarsely ground
black pepper
¼ tsp. crushed red chile
flakes
8 skinless bone-in chicken
thighs (about 3¼ lb.),
trimmed of excess fat
8 scallions, trimmed

Heat a gas grill to medium or prepare a medium-hot charcoal fire. In a medium bowl, whisk the sherry, soy sauce, honey, 2 Tbs. of the oil, the garlic, ginger, pepper, and chile flakes until blended. Pour into a large zip-top bag. Cut two or three ¼-inch-deep slashes in the skin side of the thighs and put them in the bag. Marinate at room temperature for 10 minutes (or up to 4 hours in the fridge), turning the bag a few times to evenly coat the thighs.

Coat the scallions in the remaining 1 Tbs. oil. Lift the thighs out of the marinade (let excess marinade drain back into the bag) and set them on the hottest part of the grill. Arrange the scallions around the thighs on the cooler parts of the grill. Grill, turning frequently to prevent burning, until the scallions are tender, 5 to 8 minutes, and the thighs are cooked through, about 20 minutes. Remove the scallions and thighs from the grill as they finish cooking and tent loosely with foil.

While the thighs are on the grill, pour the marinade into a small saucepan. Bring to a boil over high heat and reduce the liquid to a syrupy glaze (about ⅓ cup), 10 to 15 minutes.

Serve with the glaze drizzled over them.

Serving suggestion:

Pair with steamed fragrant white rice like jasmine.



Asparagus & Pancetta Frittata

Serves two or three.

5 large eggs
½ cup whole milk or half-and-half
¼ cup plus 1 Tbs. freshly grated Parmigiano
Reggiano
1 Tbs. Dijon mustard
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 Tbs. olive oil
1 slice (¼ inch thick) pancetta (about 2 oz.), diced
1 Tbs. minced shallot
¼ lb. thin asparagus, trimmed and sliced into
1-inch pieces on the diagonal

Position an oven rack 4 to 6 inches from the broiler and heat the broiler on high.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the eggs, milk, ¼ cup of the Parmigiano, the mustard, ¼ tsp. salt, and about 3 grinds of pepper. Set aside.

Heat the oil in an 8-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add the diced pancetta. Cook, stirring constantly, until the pancetta is pale golden, 3 to 4 minutes. Add the shallot and asparagus and cook, stirring frequently, until the asparagus is crisp-tender, about 3 minutes.

Reduce the heat to low and pour the egg mixture into the skillet. Cook, giving the eggs a few stirs in the beginning to distribute the asparagus, until the eggs are well set and slightly puffed around the edges but are still loose in the center, 13 to 15 minutes.

Sprinkle the remaining 1 Tbs. Parmigiano on top of the frittata. Slide the pan under the broiler and cook until the frittata is puffed, browned, and set, 3 to 4 minutes. Let cool for 5 minutes (just enough time to toss together a salad). Cut into wedges and serve.



Southwestern Tuna with a Grilled Summer Salad

Serves four.

- 2 large cloves garlic, minced (about 1 Tbs.)**
- 3 Tbs. plus 2 tsp. olive oil**
- 1 tsp. ground cumin**
- 1 tsp. fresh lime juice, plus lime wedges for serving**
- Kosher salt and coarsely ground black pepper**
- Cayenne**
- 1½ lb. 1-inch-thick tuna steaks (2 steaks about 10 oz. each)**
- 1½ lb. squash (about 3 medium zucchini or summer squash)**
- 2 red bell peppers**
- 1 Tbs. balsamic vinegar**
- 2 Tbs. chopped fresh cilantro**

Heat a gas grill to medium high or prepare a medium-hot charcoal fire.

In a small bowl, mix half of the garlic, 2 tsp. of the olive oil, the cumin, lime juice, ½ tsp. salt, ½ tsp. pepper, and a large pinch of cayenne. Spread an equal amount of the rub on both sides of the tuna and let it sit for 5 minutes.

Trim the ends of each squash and cut lengthwise into ½-inch-thick slices. Core and seed the red peppers and cut each into 4 pieces. Pile the squash and red peppers into a bowl. Drizzle with the remaining 3 Tbs. olive oil and sprinkle

liberally with salt and pepper and another large pinch of cayenne. Toss to coat evenly.

Set the tuna steaks on the hottest part of the grill and fan the peppers and squash around them. Turning the vegetables occasionally, grill the tuna 3 minutes per side for medium rare or until cooked to the doneness you like. Transfer the tuna to a clean plate and tent loosely with foil. Continue grilling and turning the vegetables until they're just tender, another 2 to 4 minutes, and transfer to a cutting board. Scrape the pepper skins off with a paring knife, if you like. Coarsely chop the vegetables and put them back into the same bowl in which they were tossed. Sprinkle the balsamic vinegar, half the cilantro, and the remaining garlic over the vegetables and toss to coat evenly. Taste for salt and pepper. Cut the tuna steaks into four portions.

To serve, make a pile of the vegetable salad in the middle of each plate and lay the pieces of tuna on top. Sprinkle with the remaining cilantro and serve with the lime wedges.



Creamy Lemon Parfait

Yields 4 parfaits.

- 6 oz. cream cheese, softened**
- ¾ cup confectioners' sugar, sifted**
- Pinch table salt**
- 1 cup heavy cream, chilled**
- 1½ Tbs. fresh lemon juice**
- 1 tsp. finely grated lemon zest**
- 1 Tbs. finely chopped fresh mint (optional); plus 4 sprigs for garnish**
- 4 cups fresh berries (I use a mix of raspberries, strawberries, and blueberries), rinsed and drained well**

Combine the softened cream cheese, confectioners' sugar, and salt in a medium bowl. Using a hand-held electric mixer, beat on low speed until the cream cheese is smooth and the sugar is incorporated. Add the heavy cream and beat on low speed until the mixture is smooth, stopping to scrape down the sides of the bowl as needed. Increase the speed to medium high and beat until the cream is billowy and holds medium-firm peaks, 30 to 60 seconds. Add the lemon juice and zest and the chopped mint, if using. Stir briefly to blend.

Line up four parfait glasses or stemmed wineglasses. Beginning and ending with the berries, evenly layer all the berries and all but about ⅔ cup of the cream into the glasses. Top with a dollop of the remaining cream and garnish with a mint sprig. The parfaits can be made an hour or two ahead of serving.

tip

❖ You can make variations of this parfait with crushed cookies or slices of pound cake. You can also use the lemon cream, with or without the fruit, as a topping for pound cake or angel food cake.



Broiled Tomatoes with Feta & Herbed Couscous

Serves four as a side dish or two as a vegetarian main dish.

Kosher salt
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup couscous
2 large ripe tomatoes (about 1 lb. total)
Freshly ground black pepper
5 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
2 small cloves garlic, minced
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup finely chopped fresh herbs (any combination of mint, basil, and chives)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup crumbled feta (about 2 oz.)
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup pitted kalamata olives (about 14), coarsely chopped
 $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. finely grated lemon zest
3 Tbs. fresh lemon juice

Position a rack in the middle of the oven and heat the broiler to high. Line a heavy rimmed baking sheet with foil.

In a small saucepan, bring 1 cup water and $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. salt to a boil over high heat. Remove from the heat and pour in the couscous. Stir once or twice with a fork and cover with a tight-fitting lid or foil. Set aside until the liquid is absorbed and the couscous is plumped and tender, about 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, core the tomatoes and cut them in half horizontally. Put them cut side up on the baking sheet and season generously with salt and pepper. Drizzle with 2 Tbs. of the olive oil and sprinkle with half of the garlic and half of the herbs. Broil the tomatoes on the middle rack of the oven for 4 minutes. Sprinkle the tomatoes with the feta and continue to broil until the feta turns a blistery brown, another 4 to 7 minutes.

Remove the cover from the couscous and fluff the grains with a fork. Stir in the remaining herbs, garlic, and 3 Tbs. olive oil, along with the olives, lemon zest, and lemon juice, until well blended and fluffy. Season with salt and pepper. Spoon the couscous onto a plate and set the tomatoes alongside. Serve immediately.



Seared Turkey & White Bean Burgers

Yields 4 small burgers; serves two to four.

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup canned small white beans (cannellini are also fine), rinsed and drained
3 Tbs. olive oil
 $\frac{1}{2}$ clove garlic, minced
2 Tbs. finely diced red bell pepper
3 Tbs. plain dried breadcrumbs
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. Worcestershire sauce
1 large egg
1 Tbs. thinly sliced chives
 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. ground turkey
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
8 slices ($\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick) good country bread (like ciabatta), toasted

Combine the white beans, 1 Tbs. of the olive oil, and the garlic in a large bowl. Using a fork, lightly smash the beans and mix with the oil and garlic until blended. Add the red pepper, breadcrumbs, Worcestershire sauce, egg, and chives. Mix until blended. Crumble the ground turkey and add it to the bowl, along with

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt and a generous sprinkling of pepper. Gently mix with a fork or your hands until just blended; don't overmix or the burgers will be tough. Fill a medium bowl with water, moisten your hands, and shape the meat into four patties about 3 inches in diameter and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick.

Heat the remaining 2 Tbs. olive oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Cook the burgers until the bottoms are browned, 4 to 5 minutes. Flip the burgers and continue cooking until they're firm to the touch and register 165°F on an instant-read thermometer, another 5 to 8 minutes. Serve immediately on the toasted bread.

Serving suggestion: Top with tomato, thinly sliced red onion, and a tangy honey mustard.



Wilted Curried Cabbage Slaw

Yields 6 cups; serves six to eight.

½ cup olive oil
½ cup golden raisins (dark are fine too)
2 large shallots (about 2½ oz.), thinly sliced
2 tsp. hot or mild curry powder
⅓ cup cider vinegar
1 small head (about 1½ lb.) **Savoy cabbage**, quartered, cored, and cut into thin strips
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
⅓ cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

Pour the olive oil into a 12-inch skillet and stir in the raisins, shallots, and curry powder. Simmer over medium-low heat until the shallots are slightly softened and the curry is fragrant, about 4 minutes. Raise the heat to medium, add the cider vinegar, and bring to a boil. Pile in the cabbage, season with 1 tsp. salt and ½ tsp. pepper, and cook, tossing with tongs, until the cabbage starts to wilt and lose some of its volume, about 2 minutes. Remove from the heat, cover loosely with a piece of foil, and let sit until softened and wilted, about 10 minutes. Remove the foil, add the parsley, season with salt and pepper to taste, and mix until well blended.

Serving suggestion: Serve alongside grilled pork chops.



Warm Chocolate-Nut Brownie

Serves six to eight.

2¾ oz. (about ⅔ cup) **all-purpose flour**
⅔ cup granulated sugar
⅔ cup chopped bittersweet or semisweet chocolate or morsels
¼ cup unsweetened natural cocoa powder (about ¾ oz.)
⅛ tsp. ground cinnamon
¼ tsp. baking powder
¼ tsp. table salt
2 large eggs, lightly beaten
⅓ cup vegetable oil
½ cup chopped nuts (walnuts or pecans)

Heat the oven to 350°F. Lightly grease a 9-inch pie plate (I use Pyrex). In a medium bowl, mix the flour, sugar, chopped chocolate, cocoa, cinnamon, baking powder, and salt with a wooden spoon or rubber spatula until well blended. Add the eggs and oil and mix until blended. Scrape into the pie plate and spread evenly. Sprinkle the chopped nuts over the top. Bake in the center of the oven until a pick inserted in the center comes out with some gooey pieces clinging to it, 20 to 25 minutes. Let cool at least 10 minutes. Cut into wedges and serve hot, warm, or cold.

Serving suggestion: Serve with a scoop of ice cream or a dollop of whipped cream.